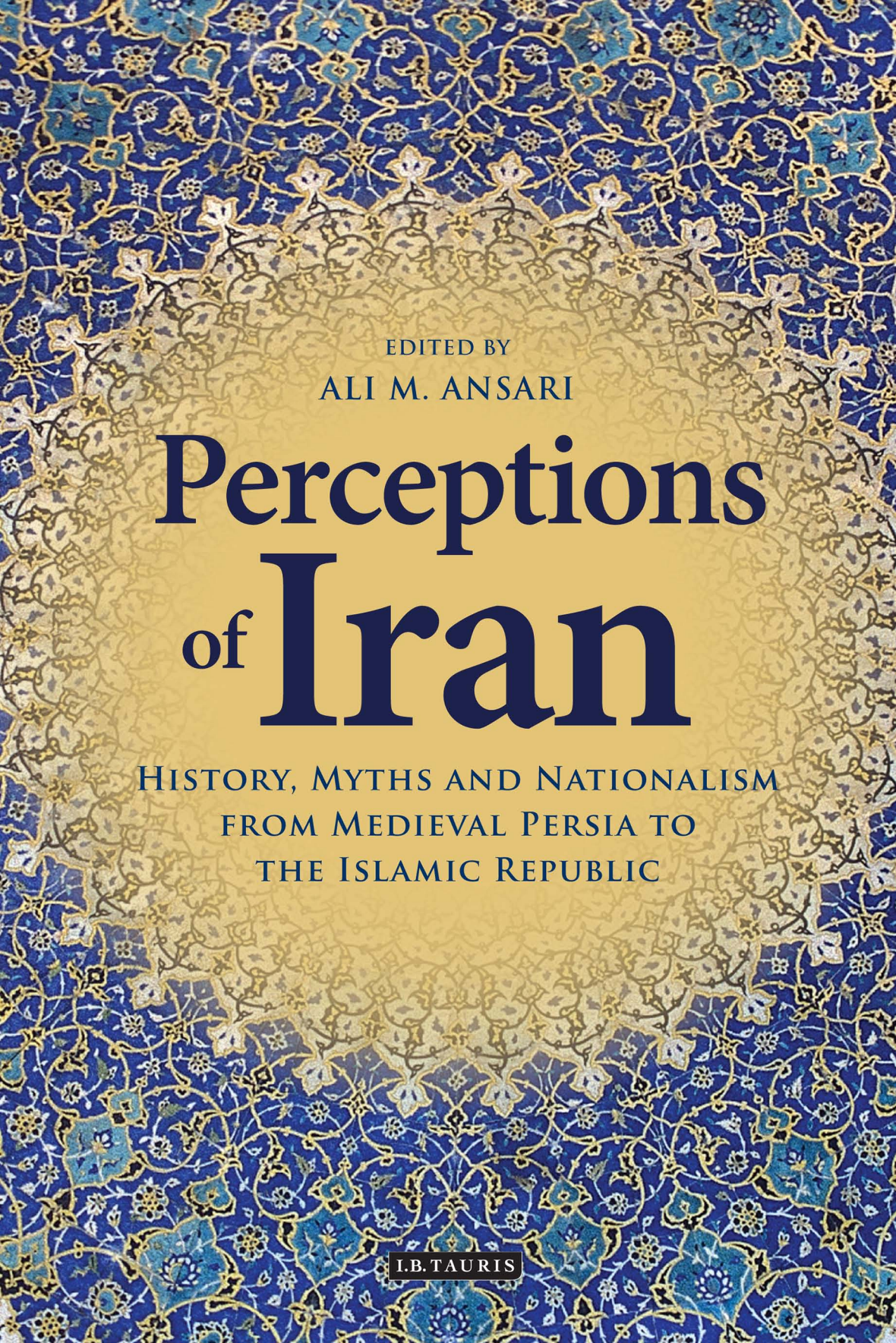
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ALI M. ANSARI
Perceptions of Iran
History, Myths and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic
I.B.TAURIS

Ali M. Ansari is Professor in the School of History at the University of St Andrews. He is the author of several books on Iran, including *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change* (2000).

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History, Myths and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic

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Introduction

Ali M. Ansari

While the writing of Iranian history has grown dramatically in recent decades, the study of Iranian historiography has been comparatively slow to emerge, and in spite of one or two notable exceptions, the field may be said to be in its infancy.[1] Indeed, if the politics behind historical writing has rarely been disputed among Iranian historians and their readership, the precise nature of that politics has in equal measure been poorly understood, studied or reflected upon.

The earliest historians of the Persianate world sought to apply the lessons of the past to the government of the present with mirrors of princes that aimed to educate the ruling elite to the tenets and principles of best practice by drawing on the idealised examples of the past – a function that would later be adopted by European historians. Others sought to protect a broader heritage and ideal of Iran – variously defined – in the face of dramatic, turbulent and often violent change. In the modern age, the new discipline of history, drawn from Western methods forged in the Enlightenment, was put to the service of a nascent and reinvigorated nationalism, much as it had been in the West itself. Here, the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment and the transnational principles it espoused and promoted were paradoxically applied for the purpose of creating distinct and often opposing 'national' histories. These national histories have been presented in many forms, and interpreted through diverse ideological lenses, but have in essence remained true to their central purpose of redefining Iranian identity for the present through a form of historical cohesion that would cement the state and the nation. Secular nationalists, Marxists and Islamists all sought to reinterpret history to the service of contemporary politics sharing a curiously Whig faith in progress, emancipation and ultimate salvation. In this sense they all betrayed, to a greater or lesser extent, the Whig inheritance they borrowed from the European Enlightenment.

This collection of essays, drawn from papers presented at a conference held in the University of St Andrews in 2009, on the theme of *Historiography and Iran in Comparative Perspective*, expand on these themes of nationalism, the idea of

progress and the West, looking both at Iranian appreciations of the West, and Western constructions of Iran, or in the Western vernacular, Persia. Central to this is the concept of 'freedom' itself as conceived among the Greeks in contradistinction to the Persians whose 'slavery' was argued to be at the roots of their ultimate failure and demise. Lynette Mitchell effectively dissects this argument and shows how in the case of Herodotus' interpretation of Cyrus the Great, this motif was challenged and contradicted as the monarchical rule of Cyrus was considered a harbinger of freedom. The legacy of Cyrus, through both biblical and classical sources, is explored by Robert Bartlett in his investigation of the image of ancient Iran in the medieval Western imagination, an image that, as Bartlett points out, did not loom large but which nonetheless persisted in intriguing ways.

The importance of Cyrus to the myth of emancipation so important to modern nationalists and their historical writing is explored in my own chapter, which looks more broadly at the context of historical writing in Iran, the modern debt to the Enlightenment, narrative displacement and the persistence of mythologies – themes that are taken up by a number of other chapters in this volume. David Motadel analyses the development of the European myth of Aryanism and its complex and often contradictory appropriation by Iranian nationalists, who were not always fluent nor comprehending of the European concept. In this vein, Pejman Abdolmohammadi looks in more detail at some key Iranian nationalist thinkers and their interactions with Western ideas.

Mythologies and the uses and abuses of history are key themes in the chapter by Anja Pistor-Hatam, who looks at the way in which the Mongol invasions have been interpreted and applied in the Islamic Republic of Iran, while Farhang Jahanpour and Elisa Sabadini investigate the ways in which perceptions of the other have changed and developed through Iranian Occidentalism in the twentieth century, and Italian 'Orientalism' in the early modern era. Narrative displacement in the histories of Sasanian Iran, perhaps the crucial period for the formation of the historical idea of Iran, is explored by Touraj Daryaee, while two further chapters explore distinct aspects of time and narrative. Saeed Talajooy provides a fascinating account of the way in which the Iranian playwright, Bahram Beyzaie, dramatised Iranian nationalist history, while Stephen Blake addresses a crucial though often neglected aspect of historical perception: the notion and measurement of time. How societies and polities perceive of time and chronology is central to their world view and thus identity, as the noted Iranian nationalist Hasan Taqizadeh knew only too well from his own extensive studies of the Iranian calendar.

The conference and the chapters that form the backbone of this volume would not have been possible without the support of the Iran Heritage Foundation and the additional funding provided by the British Institute of Persian Studies. I am very grateful to both the Foundation and the Institute for their support,

without which the conference would not have been possible. I am also grateful to Dr Paul Churchill for his exhaustive work in managing both the conference and the collation of the chapters, to Dr Giorgio Rota, and to the staff at I.B.Tauris in bringing the intellectual fruits of this endeavour to a wider reading public.

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Note

1. One notable exception being T. Atabaki (ed.), *Iran in the Twentieth Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009).

1

Myth, history and narrative displacement in Iranian historiography

Ali M. Ansari

In a series of lectures outlining his Philosophy of History, Hegel argued:

> The Persians are the first Historical People; Persia was the first empire that passed away. While China and India remain stationary, and perpetuate a natural vegetative existence even to the present time, this land has been subject to those developments and revolutions which alone manifest a historical condition […] But here in Persia first arises that light which shines itself, and illuminates what is around; for Zoroaster's 'Light' belongs to the World of Consciousness.[1]

Indeed, for Hegel: 'With the Persian empire we first enter onto continuous history.' Hegel's conception of 'history' as the unfolding of the cunning of reason, and the progress of humanity from darkness to light, slavery to freedom, has justifiably been criticised for its heavily deterministic view of historical development, and not least for his assertion that the apotheosis of political and social development, begun by the Persians, transitioned to the Greek and Romans, reaches fruition in the Germanic peoples under, fortuitously enough, Prussian leadership. Yet if his views have been sidelined, or perhaps more accurately, appropriated and reinterpreted by Marx, this should not detract from the profound influence Hegel and his ideas have had, directly or otherwise, on our understanding of history and more importantly, for our purposes, the place of Iran (or Persia) within this conception. Hegel did not invent the idea of history as progress – this he inherited from the Enlightenment – but he did repackage it as a process that, while beginning in 'Persia', did, through time, relocate to the West. 'Persia' is therefore at once the source and origin of a singularly Western narrative of history, but one that has been left behind. Indeed: 'The principle of development begins with the history of Persia. This therefore constitutes strictly the beginning of World-History.'[2]

The conception of Persia as having served the function of originator and catalyst for a narrative of progress that culminated in the West was one that informed what may be termed the 'cosmopolitan' histories of the Enlightenment[3] and arguably reached its apogee in the ideological perversion that was the Aryan myth.[4] But more potent than this myth of origin was the idea that history had passed the Persians by, such that in the contemporary period they effectively had no history. This aspect of Hegel's conception has had a far more consequential effect on our understanding of Iran and its history than the recognition that it served as both the catalyst and the essential 'other' to the idea of the West. In this sense Hegel's philosophical conception of history framed and arguably determined what would later be defined, in the Saidian sense, as a thoroughly 'Orientalist' understanding of history in which the Orient was not only stripped of an indigenous 'authentic' history, but, by extension, of an indigenous 'authentic' identity. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, Hegel's philosophical process took on a more immediately political hue as it was reinterpreted and pressed into colonial service. The absence of history, progress and discernible identity all served to legitimate the growing European global presence, as the heirs of a development that had been initiated in the East returned to confer the bounties of this process on an aged and stagnant Orient.[5] The belief, for example, that Iranians had forgotten their history until the Europeans graciously rediscovered it for them is one that has gained currency among contemporary historians of the East, and Iran in particular.[6]

But here one must pause to consider what sort of history. Hegel's conception reflected his interest in the broader philosophy of history and the idea of progress. It did not immediately translate to notions of history as identity, nor, by Hegel's own classifications, to history in its 'original' or 'reflective' forms.[7] Indeed, the tendency to extend this view to other forms of historical writing is quite clearly unsustainable, and while some might limit Persian historical writing to those which would fit the category of 'original' history (contemporary chronicles and records), it is quite apparent from the record that historical writing of the reflective variety also existed.[8] One needs only to peruse the extensive historical writings of Ata Malik Juvaini (1226–83), Rashid al Din (1247–1318) or Mirkhwand (1433–98) to witness a subtle, often critical and highly reflective historian at work.[9] These were by no means simple chronicles of their time – although they may have been used as such by modern historians in search of facts – but, on the contrary, sought to explain, justify and above all educate their public (in particular their political public, princes and rulers) through historical analogy.[10] This was narrative history with political and moral purpose. This was history conveyed through the medium of myth, such that factual accuracy was often – though by no means always – sacrificed to the needs of poetic licence.[11] The means of transmission – mythopoeic narrative – regularly outweighed the

factual rigour of the message itself, and the purpose and function of history was not so much to convey history 'as it was',[12] but to divine a moral purpose and guide to both life and political action. These were, in their political renditions, the mirrors for princes that would later be appropriated and adapted in Western political thought, most obviously in the writings of Machiavelli, but also reflected in a number of political biographies written in the Enlightenment.[13]

That is not to suggest that issues of identity were necessarily far from the surface. In his preface to his *History*, Mirkhwand takes the opportunity to outline the various characteristics required of a good historian, among which he includes 'integrity and good faith'. These qualities, he argues, explain why the work of historians tend to long outlive their authors; he then proceeds to list the great historians of the past, dividing them among the Arabic and Persian traditions. By this he means the language in which they wrote, and Tabari, for example, is listed among the prominent Arabic writers. Tabari's fame rests as a chronicler (annalist) of early Islam and the Abbasid Caliphate in particular, but his monumental history entitled the *History of Prophets and Kings*, while heavily leaning towards the religious tradition and a specifically Islamic narrative of descent, still managed to integrate a narrative of kings that was largely (though not exclusively) derived from the Persian tradition. This binary narrative is suggestive of a much more complex historical inheritance that sought to combine a specifically religious with a secular narrative, and what is striking about the inclusion of the Persian narrative – even if it is criticised – is that it is included at all. In some cases, the Persian narrative of descent (from Kaiomars rather than Adam) is included as a foil to prove the authenticity of the religious history. More often than not, it is included as an alternative if not equal tradition, while subsequent historians took the opportunity either to embellish and expand on the Persian narratives, and, more interestingly, increasingly regarded them as a source of experience and political wisdom.[14] This tendency was undoubtedly encouraged by the rapid accrual of Persian bureaucrats to the Abbasid court in Baghdad.

This political nostalgia was further reinforced by a need to explain and record transformation and loss. Indeed, in stark contrast to the British Whig historians of the future, Persian historians of the Iranian world were in no small measure motivated by a desire to explain the loss of their civilisation, and to protect and perhaps nurture its heritage for the future. Arguably the two most productive periods of pre-modern historical writing occur in the aftermath of the Arab/Islamic and Mongol conquests. Among the pre-eminent historians of the Persian tradition, Mirkhwand lists Rashid al Din and Juvaini as well as Hamdallah Mostofi, all of whom wrote in the traumatic aftermath of the Mongol conquest of the thirteenth century. But the individual who tops Mirkhwand's list, the first among the historians of Persia, is Ferdowsi, the author of the poetic epic, the *Shahnameh*, compiled, written and produced in the centuries following the Arab/

Islamic conquest.[15] The *Shahnameh* or 'Book of Kings', far from being a chronicle of kings, is a window into a vanished world, and indeed at times a clearly much-lamented civilisation. This lengthy exposition of the ascent of Iranian civilisation combines both 'mythological' and 'historical' sections, though the former regularly spills over into the latter and the boundaries are never clear. This distinction was neither apparent nor necessarily important to those later pre-modern historians who plundered the *Shahnameh* for information, even if it was not always used uncritically. Indeed, these pre-modern historians of Iran arguably approached their material with more subtlety and did not ruthlessly bifurcate narratives into 'history' and 'myth', retaining the former and discarding the latter as the modern discipline might do. These tales might not be factually accurate, but their longevity testified to their integrity and to a deeper truth that had social and moral value, and was thus worth recording and disseminating for future generations. The view that the idea of Iran and Iranian civilisation became a literary motif that was protected and transmitted within the literary imagination of the Persianate world is a modern distinction that disguises the reality that the idea of Iran remained part of a broader historical and bureaucratic tradition: if not explicit, then implicit, but nonetheless extant.

As we approached the modern age in the context of European history and the growing encounters between Europe and Iran, the legacy and influence of this bureaucratic-literary tradition became ever more apparent. In describing the Safavid Empire at the end of the seventeenth century, Sir John Chardin recounts in his *Travels*:

> Persia is the greatest empire in the world, if you consider it according to the geographical description given by the Persians; because they represent it to the full extent of its ancient boundaries, which are the four great seas; the Black Sea, the Red Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Gulph of Persica [*sic*].[16]

These boundaries reflect the historical tradition as depicted within the *Shahnameh*, and effectively describes an understanding of the middle Persian (Sasanian) concept of *Iranshahr* – later 'modernised' by Mirkhwand into *Iranzamin* (the land of Iran). Just so that there can be no doubt as to the nomenclature, Chardin continues: 'The Persians, in naming their country, make use of one word, which they indifferently pronounce Iroun, and Iran.'[17] A century later, Sir John Malcolm was equally emphatic when, in the opening page of his monumental two-volume *History of Persia*, he too drew attention to the indigenous use of 'Iran' not only as a geographic description but also as a political statement with historic depth.[18] It was this depth that he sought systematically to study and render into English in his *History*, and he approached his sources with a sympathetic if critical eye. It was immediately apparent that the one thing Iranians were not short of was an appreciation of their historical worth, even if this appreciation was not grounded

in a rigorous sifting of myth from history. Indeed, Malcolm, not beset by the conceit that would later afflict practitioners of the emerging discipline of history, noted that all peoples, including the Greeks, had a tendency to be selective in their recording of history and that this was not unique to the distant past.[19] In both his History and the various anecdotes recounted in his memoirs (*Sketches of Persia*), Malcolm makes clear that Iranians not only enjoyed a profound historical consciousness but, if anything, are gripped by it. In one poignant vignette, Malcolm notes that while preparing for his presentation at court, his Iranian hosts abruptly revealed a painting of the Sherley brothers complete in Elizabethan dress, in the expectation that Malcolm and his entourage would equip themselves in identical fashion. Their disappointment at realising that this would not be happening elicited the astonishment at the English lack of respect for tradition.[20] In this sense, Iranians suffered from an excess of history which inhibited their progress; not so much, to return to Hegel, that history had passed them by, but that history had imprisoned them. Nietzsche perhaps best described it best when he argued:

> The oversaturation of an age with history seems to me to be hostile and dangerous to life in five respects: such an excess creates that contrast between inner and outer […] and thereby weakens the personality; it leads an age to imagine that it possesses the rarest of virtues, justice, to a greater degree than any other age; it disrupts the instincts of a people, and hinders the individual no less than the whole in the attainment of maturity; it implants the belief, harmful at any time, in the old age of mankind, the belief that one is a latecomer and epigone; it leads an age into a dangerous mood of irony in regard to itself and subsequently into the even more dangerous mood of cynicism: in this mood, however, it develops more and more a prudent practical egoism through which the forces of life are paralysed and at last destroyed.[21]

The Persian historical tradition may have survived the onslaught of the Arab/Islamic conquest and the introduction of a powerful new religious narrative, but it faced an altogether more serious challenge with the new 'scientific' history of the modern age.

To be sure, the displacement of one narrative by another was not new to Iranian historical tradition. The Achaemenids and Parthians had largely been erased from the historical memory in the Sasanian era and replaced by an 'Eastern Iranian' narrative more in tune with Zoroastrian traditions, though arguably retaining a distinct secular narrative arc.[22] The Kayanids effectively replaced the Achaemenids, while the Parthians had their 500-year dynasty reduced to a preamble to the emergence and ascendancy of the Sasanians (as both successors and an extension to the Kayanids). Moreover, the secular nature of this tradition was reinforced by the inclusion of the Alexander romance, which would not have been acceptable to a strictly religious (Zoroastrian) narrative. Be that as it may,

this narrative, ultimately enshrined in the poetic epic of the *Shahnameh*, not only survived the Muslim conquest but also effectively flourished as an alternative, providing lessons on kingship and government to a succession of Muslim rulers. From a historiographical point of view these narratives, as noted above, might sit awkwardly next to each other, but this did not stop a succession of historians attempting to reconcile them, not least the versatile Mirkhwand, who regularly sought to situate one narrative within the other, arguing; for example, that Kaiomars was alternatively thought to be a son of Noah, and by others the equivalent Persian name for Adam.[23] Indeed, if personalities could not be reconciled then at least their chronologies could be synchronised, a process that Malcolm continued.[24]

The reasons this situation persisted – strikingly understated as it has been[25] – is alternatively put down to: the limited nature of the conquest, which allowed many local dynasts to continue (paying taxes to the Caliph rather than the King of Kings, though this does not explain the earlier narrative displacement following the even more limited Macedonian conquest); the cultural confidence of the Sasanian Empire that was fully absorbed into the new Caliphate; and perhaps, most importantly, the absorption of the bureaucratic elite into the new order.[26] But another aspect that is associated with this bureaucratic appropriation was the nature of history writing itself and the implicit recognition that the new religious narrative was not substantively superior to that which already existed. Indeed, for a bureaucratic elite fed on a steady diet of classical philosophy, there may have been a degree of condescension towards the religious narratives now being imposed upon them.[27] All these factors may have contributed to the continuation of these dual narratives and the persistence of a distinctly Iranian tradition.

This convenient if awkward co-existence was to change in the nineteenth century with the introduction of new historical methodologies to the writing of Iranian history. Within a generation, a tradition that had survived multiple invasions and the imposition of a new religion found itself in full-scale retreat in the face of a discipline armed with the radical new methods of scientific rigour. The new 'fact' displaced the old 'myth', and it did so by first appropriating the traditional bureaucratic elites.[28] This to be sure was neither a smooth nor uniform process, but interesting parallels may be found in the European tradition, most obviously in the absorption and subversion of the Scottish historical tradition to the Anglo-British narrative developed in the main by new Scottish 'Whig' historians of the Enlightenment.[29] This particular example is important not only because it shows a narrative displacement proceeding in the full light of recent history, but because the process itself, taking place in a European country in the grip of an intellectual enlightenment, displays many characteristics of the process and procedure of displacement. Scottish narratives of descent by the early modern period, and in particular in the aftermath of the union of the crown

with that of England, had settled on the mythological origins of the Scottish monarchy – and by extension a Scottish constitution – in the fourth century BC by one Fergus MacFerquhard. This 'Fergusian' myth of origins had been adopted by both Jacobites and Whigs in the ensuing historical debate and, while periodically contested, gradually settled to become a defined fixture in the emerging Scottish historical consciousness.

As Kidd has argued, it was this very definition that was to make it vulnerable to effective deconstruction in the eighteenth century by a new generation of historians armed with the tools of a more rigorous historical method.[30] English historical mythologies were on the other hand more ambiguous and malleable, making them more impervious to outright challenge.[31] In this sense the Scots, as a consequence of the anxieties wrought by political change and the challenges posed by rival (if not directly competing) narratives, had compensated by developing a well defined if fixed mythology, which, to paraphrase Nietzsche, had resulted in an 'oversaturation' that paradoxically made the narrative vulnerable to displacement. In the Scottish case, this displacement was engineered almost entirely by the Scots themselves; first in the deconstruction of the myth, to be followed by its replacement by an Anglo-British narrative of emancipation – devised, revised and written by Scottish Whig historians, the most famous of whom was David Hume. The distinctly Scottish narrative or myth of emancipation and progress towards freedom simply did not satisfy the political and intellectual demands of a new historical age, and was consequently marginalised in favour of the far more pliable, and by extension credible, English version, repackaged within a British frame of reference.[32]

The Iranian case was similar if distinct, inasmuch as the process of deconstruction and displacement was conceived abroad and applied to Iran by both non-native and ultimately native historians who appropriated methods of historical enquiry developed elsewhere. But the process of displacement was similar inasmuch as Iranian historical myths likewise enjoyed a detailed and certain existence that could be easily attacked. However, if Scottish Whig historians were instrumental in the displacement of their traditional mythological narratives, their Iranian intellectual heirs were learning to adapt to an approach they had inherited. Not that the inheritance proved as difficult for some as might at first be imagined. This was because the new Whig history of progress was, in its gestation and development, both cosmopolitan and transnational in outlook.[33] The message was universal and applied to all mankind; it had yet to be localised and defined as 'Western'. But it also enjoyed certain characteristics that endeared itself as an intellectual movement to Iranian intellectuals in search of an answer to the many social and political problems they faced. In the first place, in articulating a myth of emancipation – the unfolding of freedom, as Hegel would define it – the message was not only universal but inherently optimistic. 'Civilisation'

was an aspiration that could be achieved by all. If the West boasted of its achievements, it did not do so from a perspective of innate superiority, but rather from the recognition that in the past Western society and culture was considerably more base than many of those in the East. Indeed, many of the early protagonists of this narrative sought to situate this myth firmly within a broader humanistic tradition whose historical lineage could be traced well beyond the borders of Europe: a universalised intellectual genealogy invented to reinforce the legitimacy of revolutionary ideas.[34] That they drew on both Islamic and distinctly Iranian ideas – often affiliated to a particular though not necessarily accurate understanding of Zoroastrianism – further helped to make these ideas digestible to Iranian intellectuals.[35]

The account of European (Frankish) history provided in the memoirs of three Qajar Princes who visited Britain (and to a lesser extent Europe) in the late 1830s, while simplistic in its depiction, nonetheless provided a useful understanding of this sense of progress and achievement:

> in former times, the Franks, especially those of England, were like animals and quadrupeds, and had no arts of any description. They dwelt in forests, mountains, and the extreme coasts of the sea, dressed in the skins of animals, eating the natural productions of the earth, and if they had a king, they sometimes killed him; and likewise their kings killed many of the people. These oppressions, outrages, and violations caused always quarrels between the kings and their subjects. Many people, during the height of the oppression, had no rest, and were obliged to abandon the country and go to the New World and other parts. It appears that at different times, according to the wisdom of the Lord the Omnipotent, oppression falls upon the people in different kingdoms, according to the state of their hearts. These horrible outrages which at this time are practised to their extreme in the Asiatic kingdoms, are entirely banished from Europe, where there is no oppression and cannot be. In all parts and cities in England which we visited, the inhabitants are very high minded people, and conduct their affairs with perfect prudence, so much so, that they have no governors, nor do they require civil power. All of them know the law, and what is justice: they obey their laws, which are founded on liberty. Every person enjoys this liberty and acts according to its laws.[36]

Moreover, this Whig interpretation of history was explicitly defined by liberty through the application of the law. Like their Scottish counterparts therefore, Iranian intellectuals, while attracted to the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment, found it difficult to reconcile their own narrative mythologies with the demands of constitutionalism and the myth of emancipation.[37] There was one striking exception to this rule, however. If the Scots were encouraged to dismiss the Fergusian myth and the Iranians, likewise, to marginalise their own myths of descent – as depicted in the *Shahnameh* – they possessed in the figure and personality of Cyrus the Great an authentically Iranian narrative of emancipation whose relevance and importance by all accounts was far wider than the

Iranian world. Cyrus not only 'freed' the Persians but enjoyed messianic status in the Old Testament.[38] The Iranians therefore enjoyed advantages the Scots could only envy. This goes some way to explaining the growing importance of the myth of Cyrus, not only within Western culture, but increasingly within the new narratives of Iranian descent.[39] The transition, however, was neither as rapid nor as complete as the Scottish experience, reflecting perhaps the profound socialisation of traditional Iranian mythologies and the fact that its replacement not only remained in essence a work in progress, but crucially lacked the poetic advantages of the former in terms of popular dissemination.[40]

Indeed, inasmuch as the process of narrative displacement was an elite exercise, driven and determined by intellectuals, its wider social impact was likely to be a slow and incremental affair. All the more so because literacy remained low and there was no education system through which the new ideas could be systematically disseminated. In the Iranian case at least the process can be seen in two distinct stages: the first representing what we might term elite acquisition; and the second popular dissemination. Both processes were protracted. Moreover, as will be seen, Iranian intellectuals were less enthusiastic about dismissing traditional narratives for the vital reason that they considered them useful and pertinent to the notion of civilisational education. The new narratives might provide a salient and attractive myth of emancipation that situated Iranians firmly within an emergent (and, in origins, cosmopolitan) narrative of world history, but the *moral* value of the new narratives paled in comparison with the richness of the traditional historical mythologies.[41] Initially at least, therefore, both traditions continued to exist side by side, albeit with distinct functions. What was now different was the acquisition and application of new methods of historical enquiry, along with distinctive functions for each tradition. This bifurcation of responsibility had to be negotiated carefully and, inevitably the rigours of the new methods increasingly relegated tradition to the margins. The triumph proved incomplete, however, and with no little irony the new narratives – and the dominance of the personality of Cyrus to that narrative – were absorbed and digested through a heavy coating of mythology.

During the nineteenth century, as knowledge of the new histories began to be acquired by Iranian intellectuals, they were absorbed into the poetic milieu that characterised the mythological inheritance. The history of Cyrus and the Achaem-enids was integrated, often awkwardly, with the traditional narratives, and even when the displacement was well underway, the means and form were distinctly traditional. Mirza Agha Khan Kermani's *Salar-nameh*, for example – perhaps the first Iranian history to explore the notion of the idea of the 'Aryan' nation – was presented in a poetic style reminiscent of the *Shahnameh*.[42] This in many ways reflected the high esteem in which the *Shahnameh*, as the repository of the 'national' idea, continued to be held by Iranian intellectuals. Nevertheless,

even this esteem regularly transitioned from the sublime to the ridiculous as some intellectuals sought to apply the new methods to the old myths, with extraordinary results.

In the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, as these new ideas on history, identity and nationalism increasingly gained traction within politics, a new sense of rigour and urgency was imposed on what had remained essentially a literary debate. As the new ideas and approaches were being applied, they gained a new discipline and indeed a sense of purpose. New journals began systematically to disseminate the new ideas in a series of critical essays and opinion pieces that sought to shake Iranians from a historical stupor that would have been familiar to Hegel. Prominent among these was the newspaper *Kaveh*, published by the revolutionary nationalist, Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, from his exile in Berlin between 1916 and 1922. Taqizadeh was firmly located within the new school of historical thought and sought to educate his readers as to the distinction between 'real history' (*tavarikhe-e sahih*) and myth (*afsaneh*).[43] What had particularly irritated him was the tendency of zealous nationalists to exaggerate the chronology of Iranian history by calculating and adding the regnal years of all the monarchs listed in the *Shahnameh*. This surreal exercise had reportedly resulted in one 'historian' attesting that the longevity (and, by extension, legitimacy) of the Iranian kingdom extended to 10,001,010,908,314 years! For Taqizadeh, the excessive pride and enthusiasm that extreme nationalism encouraged was wholly counterproductive, not only for the ignorance it exhibited, but (perhaps more importantly) for the incorrect lessons and conclusion which resulted. The point was to learn from history to improve oneself and to correct the political and social mistakes of the past. In this sense, 'real' history shared a common purpose with 'mythical' history, further reflecting that the distinction that was becoming embedded in Western historiography was never as clear as some proponents suggested.[44]

Taqizadeh and his Iranian compatriots enjoyed an advantage that their Western colleagues did not have: the diversity of the Persian vocabulary, which did not limit historians to a simply and somewhat rigid distinction. Indeed, apart from history (*tarikh*) and myth (*afsaneh*), Persian speakers could use a third term, *ostureh* (ironically rooted in the Greek *historia*), which was applied to what might be usefully defined as 'historical myths' – those myths that had some relationship to the truth whether real or moral. The *Shahnameh*, and its associated epics, could therefore be slotted into this category and remained legitimate, if distinct from 'real history'. Thus, if Taqizadeh berated his colleagues for a loose relationship with historical reality, it did not prevent him from taking the title of his radical newspaper – *Kaveh* – from the name of the mythical hero and insurrectionist, who led the uprising against *Zahhak*, the Arab tyrant of Iran. Indeed, the pages of *Kaveh* were littered with reflections and analyses of the *Shahnameh*, and its importance to Iranian identity and history.[45]

Perhaps the most energetic supporter of this dual approach to the use of history in both its forms was Mohammad Ali Foroughi Zaka ul Molk, more commonly known as Foroughi. Foroughi was an ardent supporter of modernisation and was especially active in the development of legal structures and what might best be described as civil nationalism. For Foroughi, as with Taqizadeh and other Iranian intellectuals who had imbibed at the well of the Enlightenment, just as the modern State had a duty to provide a legal framework for good governance with the aim of maximising social capital and encouraging the best from its citizens, so too was it obliged to educate its citizenry, not only with respect for the law, but, in a more general sense, manners.[46] In this respect, Foroughi's use of the *Shahnameh* and its associated myths differed little from the didactic function these historical myths had enjoyed in previous ages. They may have been stripped of their apparent historicity, but their *essential* truth remained and, as with previous experiences of transition and trauma, were vital in maintaining social coherence. The complementarity of this mythological inheritance to the rediscovered historical reality was summed up in Foroughi's unequivocal statement:

> One can count Ferdowsi among such distinguished individuals as Cyrus, Darius, Ardeshir Papagan, and Zoroaster because Cyrus founded the Iranian monarchy, Darius ordered Iranian politics, Ardeshir Papagan renewed the Iranian state, Zoroaster founded the ancient Iranian religion and Ferdowsi revived the Iranian nation.[47]

For all the adoption of the new methods of historical research, the transition as noted above proved less than smooth. Even Taqizadeh, for all his admonishments, proved less than rigorous when dealing with aspects of Islamic history and in particular the adoption of Islam in Iran, uncritically repeating the narrative of the 'Battle of the Chain', in which a decadent Sasanian Empire had to 'chain' their foot-soldiers together to prevent them running away.[48] One noted 'new' historian, Fereydoun Adamiyyat, lamented as late as 1967 that for all the new material, methods proved more difficult to change, and that Iranian historical writing remained beholden to the mytho-poetic traditions of the past. This was a consequence, Adamiyyat argued, of the

> fact that the writers (except in a few specific cases) are not trained historians or specialists in the discipline of history […] They are heirs of the past literary tradition in which science, literature, history, poetry, literary historiography, and biography were all considered a single discipline, and historiography was not regarded as an independent science.[49]

Adamiyyat's criticisms are ironic in light of the fact that he himself was likewise not a professional historian but a diplomat who had turned to history writing, much in the same vein as his bureaucratic ancestors. Indeed, one can even detect

interesting parallels in their protestations.[50] Despite this, it remains true that both Adamiyyat and his medievalist contemporary, Abdulhossein Zarrinkub (whose 'professional' training was in Persian literature), were among the most prolific and widely respected historians of their generation, and came to represent the emergence of modern historiography and historical inquiry in Iran. Adamiyyat wrote in the main on modern history with a particular focus on intellectual developments on or around the Constitutional Revolution. Zarrinkub made his name in a no less controversial period, with a highly critical inquiry into the transition to the Islamic period entitled 'Two Centuries of Silence'.[51] The study, which was first published in 1957, caused a storm of protest among the religious classes for allegedly presenting a highly selective reading of the Arab/Muslim conquest and comparing the Arabs very unfavourably with the Sasanian Empire they overthrew. Zarrinkub soon relented and acknowledged that his language may at times have been intemperate and polemical, revising later editions to include various qualifications. The original text, which is generally regarded as the product of a highly nationalist milieu,[52] was nonetheless prefaced by the author with the important distinction that he was providing an interpretation, not a definitive history, and arguably that he was seeking to challenge a complacent orthodoxy that the conquest had been welcomed by Iranians frustrated by Sasanian/Zoroastrian authoritarianism. For all the contention that the text undoubtedly contains, it has remained a staple of contemporary Iranian historiography with at least 20 reprints – accompanied though it may be with various 'health warnings'.

It was also a salutary reminder that the application of modern historiographical methods was not devoid of bias or ideological tinge, but perhaps most importantly that history writing was always being pulled in ideological directions reflecting both the ideas of the historian and the context in which they wrote. There is no doubt that both Zarrinkub and Adamiyyat were affected by both their own world views and the frustrations of the historical orthodoxies that dominated the intellectual landscape. They may have written her own histories but not in circumstances of their own choosing, and if they reflected the nationalist mood of contemporary intellectual life, they were likewise reacting against orthodoxies whose intolerance occasionally turned violent. The noted historian and polemicist, Ahmad Kasravi, was murdered in 1946 following his forensic criticism of, and barely disguised contempt for, the dogmatic reading of Islam that pervaded both the seminaries and popular culture. Zarrinkub found it prudent to modify and soften some of his views, while at the same time ensuring that his studies were regularly prefaced with a systematic and extensive discussion of the sources.[53] Adamiyyat concentrated his efforts on analysing the history leading up to the Constitutional Revolution, with special attention on intellectual history. Generally respected for the rigour with which he approached his sources, he was finally roundly criticised for his study of the Tobacco boycott,

which was published in 1981, and was considered by many historians to have taken an unduly harsh position against the influence and role of the *ulema* in instigating the boycott and seeing it through to a successful conclusion.[54] For many, this book effectively reflected Adamiyyat's undisguised nationalist sympathies, and he had, for once, shown an unfortunate lack of self-discipline.

Perhaps more problematic was Adamiyyat's tendency to lend credence to a growing and increasingly fixed political mythology of foreign interference and manipulation.[55] While his first lapse in judgment may be put down to his frustrations with the imposition of an overtly and somewhat unrealistic Islamist narrative in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution,[56] the second suggested that he had a little more in common with those who drew his contempt. Indeed, the 'literary tradition' was combined with overt politicisation to regularly tilt historical writing beyond the boundaries of even a pretence of objectivity, into the realms of lyrical and often incongruous streams of historical consciousness. No better example of this was afforded by Jalal Al-e Ahmad's much-cited *Gharbzadegi* ('Westoxication'), a text that for reasons of political mood (if not historical accuracy) embedded itself in the political consciousness of a generation of disillusioned and dissatisfied Iranians, who increasingly drew their inspiration from an admixture of Islamist and Marxist ideologies.

Al-e Ahmad's text, which had originally been submitted as a report on the state of education in Iran to the Ministry of Education – and whose rejection by the Ministry only confirmed the veracity of its 'truth' by its supporters – was a curious cocktail of polemic and disenchantment, masquerading as political and historical analysis. It might read well, but it made little sense. Attacking the Shah as a 'naïve Neanderthal', the text included such observations as the fact that half a million Muslims perished at the battle of Chalderan in 1514.[57] Al-e Ahmad was clearly of the view that the facts should never get in the way of a good argument and despite the best efforts of Taqizadeh, Adamiyyat and others, by the end of the twentieth century, the discipline of historical inquiry rapidly fell victim to the expediency of politics. With the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the scale of the revisionism became both systematic and systemic as the revolutionary authorities sought to impose a narrative that was both Islamist and Revolutionary. Yet, as before, the triumph was far from complete, and with the march of technology, literary and globalisation, the official narrative faced a much more serious challenge to its authority from a more sceptical public with greater access to literature and greater ability to publish, but more importantly reflecting the heterodox inheritance the official narrative sought to disguise.

Indeed, the romantic counter-Enlightenment in Iran probably faced its greatest challenge from a member of the *ulema*, Mohammad Khatami. Khatami may have been a realist in politics, but he brought a distinctively idealist reading of historical development. Not only did he understand the importance of myths as

means of cohering societies undergoing transition,[58] but his intellectual debt to the Enlightenment was revealed in a speech to the UN General Assembly in 1998 which was pregnant with Hegel's cunning of reason:

> The word 'history' predates 'philosophy' and man is the pillar of history. History itself is the reflection of the light of Being upon various facets and dimensions of human existence […] Since 'God created man with His Own Hand', and in 'His Own Image', and since He breathed into him of 'His Own Spirit', humanity is but a single entity, and so is human history. The 'Hand of God' granted humankind history, will and freedom of choice; the 'image of God' provided him culture, spirituality and liberty; and the spirit of God bestowed upon him life and vitality. And thus, human beings have come to possess history, culture and liberty. Not only do all human beings originate from the one and the same origin and share a continuous and integrated history, but also one may further postulate a single end or telos: the telos of history is none other than spiritual culture and its requisite of genuine human liberty […] all can agree that it is only the ever-inspiring fountain of faith that breaks every old and new shackle from humanity and arrests the iterative eternal cycle, and eventually emancipates humankind from the bounds of historical determination; just as it is only the vivifying breeze of liberty that can offer faith and spirituality to humanity. Through such an understanding of freedom, the tenets of human dignity can be upheld in the face of political domination and virtue and hope against baneful blasts of despair and nihilism. Here, one can discern the trajectory of history towards liberty. The history of humankind is the history of liberty.[59]

Khatami's faith in the progress of human liberty had a 'Whiggish' determinism that undoubtedly affected his ability to achieve his political aims. But few could miss the profound influence of the ideas of the European Enlightenment on Khatami's philosophy of history.[60] While few Iranians would have accepted Hegel's argument that after the fall of the Achaemenids, the torch of progress had passed the Persians by, the difference was a matter of chronology not the substance of the argument itself. It was fundamentally a question of when this had happened, not if. Moreover, this was more than a simple appropriation of ideas or a marriage of convenience since Khatami's religious education and milieu also enjoined a utopian destination for mankind. As noted above, it was the very cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment that allowed it to transcend localisms and its articulation held particular attractions for Iranians. Yet unlike many of his political opponents, Khatami's *philosophy* of history did not intrude upon his understanding of the discipline of historical inquiry. The *reality* of history might be compared to the philosophical *ideal*, but crucially the 'facts' were not gathered, constructed or indeed invented to support a philosophy that had become increasingly ideological rather than reflective. Khatami's political demise was paralleled by a radical shift in intellectual emphasis towards a construction of historical reality determined by ideological conviction, combined with

a belief in imminent salvation. Utopia had been wedded to an increasingly paranoid ideology.[61] Ironically it has been the least attractive and intellectually rigorous aspect of Hegel's philosophy – the proposed endgame – that has been acquired by Iran's new revolutionaries. 'History' had come full circle. It was not Prussia but Iran that was the signal beneficiary of the unfolding of the consciousness of freedom.

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956), 173.
2. Ibid., 174.
3. On this, see, for example, K. O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) (Kindle Edition), loc: 46–152.
4. Hegel plainly alludes to this connection when he refers to the 'European disposition' of the Persians, in stark contrast to the 'repellant characteristics' one encounters on crossing the Indus, op. cit., 173.
5. The notion of the 'colonialism' as a catalyst for development is one that would be familiar to Marxists.
6. A notable example is offered in an otherwise sympathetic review of Iranians in history by Bernard Lewis entitled, 'The Iranians', a lecture published by Tel Aviv University in 2001. See also similar comments in B. Lewis, 'Reflections on Islamic historiography', in *Middle Eastern Lectures*, 2 (1997), 75.
7. Hegel, op. cit., 1–10.
8. Hegel's distinctions in this regard are not entirely helpful. He places Herodotus and Thucydides among the writers of original history, chroniclers of their respective ages. This description does them an injustice and Herodotus, for example, was not strictly writing about events contemporary to himself, but attempting to explain a momentous event. Hegel divides reflective history into three types in which the first two, *universal* and *pragmatical* or *didactic*, would certainly be applicable to the Persianate world.
9. Ata Malik Juvaini, the Mongol Vizier in Baghdad and author of the *Tarikh-e Jahan Gusha* (*The History of the World Conqueror*, translated and edited by J. A. Boyle (Manchester: Manchester University Press [1958], 1997)), was particularly sharp in his observations; 6–7 and 109–10. For the Persian text, see *Tarikh-e Jahan Gusha-ye Juvaini*, edited by M. Qazvini (Tehran, Naqsh Qalam, 1378/2000), 4–5 and 85–6.
10. The use of history as explanation is especially true of the historians of the Mongol period. Mirkhwand, for his part, lists ten reasons why the study of history is useful, including wisdom, knowledge and happiness. For Mirkhwand, 'History' was primarily useful for the lessons it taught. Unusually, he also discussed the proper attributes of a historian. See Mirkhwand, *History of the Early Kings of Persia: From Kaiomars, the First of the Peshdadian Dynasty, to the Conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great*, translated by D. Shea (Boston MA: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005 [reprint of 1832 edition]), 23–35. For the Persian text, see Mirkhwand, *Tarikh-e*

rouzat ul safa, I (*Iranshahr*, Asatir, 1380/2002), 11–22. For a useful discussion and correctives of the Persian historical tradition, see J. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

11. The didactic value of myth over 'history' in its chronicle variety was espoused by Aristotle, a figure of immense importance in Iranian bureaucratic tradition. See Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Penguin, 1996), ch. 9, 16.
12. On the misreading of Ranke's apparent dictum, see M. Bentley, *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999), 39.
13. The key figures here being Voltaire and his histories of Louis XIV and Peter the Great; see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 72–96.
14. See D. Tor, 'The Islamisation of Iranian kingly ideals in the Persianate Furstenspiegel', *Iran*, 49 (2011), 115–22, 119. For Balami's use of Persian narratives, see A. C. S. Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Balami's Tarikhnama* (London: Routledge, 2007).
15. Mirkhwand, op. cit., 41.
16. J. Chardin, *Travels In Persia* (London: Argonaut Press, 1927), 125. This reprint is a copy of the first complete two-volume English edition, published in 1724.
17. Ibid., 126. Chardin then proceeds to provide the incorrect etymology.
18. J. Malcolm, *History of Persia: From the Most Early Period to the Present Time*, I (London: John Murray, 1829 (1st published 1815, reprinted Adamant Media Corporation, Boston MA, 2004)), 1.
19. Ibid., I, 475.
20. J. Malcolm, *Sketches of Persia from the Journals of a Traveller in the East* (1st published 1827, reprinted Adamant Media Corporation, Boston MA, 2005), 208.
21. F. Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. D. Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 83.
22. See T. Daryaee, 'National or Keyanid history? The nature of Sasanid Zoroastrian historiography', *Iranian Studies*, 28(3–4) (1995), 129–41. See also in this respect the extended essay by E. Yarshater, 'Iranian historical tradition: b) Iranian national history', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. E. Yarshater, 3(1) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 359–480.
23. Mirkhwand, op. cit., 50; Balami, *Tarikh-name-ye Tabari* (Tehran, Soroush 1380/2002), 77. See also in this respect Juvaini op. cit., 4.
24. J. Malcolm, *History of Persia*, vol. I, 499–555. Note that one significant inconsistency was the absence of a flood narrative within Iranian tradition; an omission that is generally put down to the fact that Iranian myths originated on the Iranian plateau, while the Abrahamic myths were situated within the Mesopotamian flood plain.
25. The striking fact here is the continued existence of Iranian tradition at all.
26. See, for example, H. Kennedy, 'Survival of Iranianness', in V. Sarkhosh Curtis and S. Stewart (eds), *The Rise of Islam* (The Idea of Iran, vol. 4) (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 13–29; B. Lewis, 'The Iranians', op. cit.
27. For a good example, see Al Jahiz's sardonic view of Abbasid 'secretaries', quoted in *Life and Works of Jahiz*, tr. C. H. Pellat (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 273–5.

28. On the emergence of the 'fact', see M. Poovey, *The History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). On the appropriation of the elites, see C. Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689–c. 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 165.
29. Kidd, op. cit., 205–16.
30. Ibid., 101–2.
31. Ibid., 123–4.
32. Ibid., 209–10.
33. On this see K. O'Brien, op. cit., loc: 46–152.
34. See in this respect J. I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 615–39.
35. See J. Rose, *The Image of Zoroaster: The Persian Mage through European Eyes* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2000), 85–195. On Voltaire's views, see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 106. The fashion for Zoroastrian ideas in Enlightenment philosophy should not be underestimated, a good example being Pierre Bayle's affectation for Manichianism. See P. Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, tr. R. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 144–53.
36. Najaf Koolee Meerza, *Journal of a Residence in England*, vol. 2 (first published for private circulation in London, 1839; Adamant Media Corp. (Elibron Classics Series), 2005), 28–9; on the importance of the narrative of freedom see also J. Malcolm, *Sketches of Persia*, op. cit., 239.
37. Kidd, op. cit., 165, argues that one repository of nationalist mythology was the idealisation of the aristocracy as defenders of the nation's liberty. There are interesting parallels to be drawn here with the dominance of Pahlavs and Pahlavans with the *Shahnameh*, heroes drawn in the main from the Parthian inheritance whose chief characteristic was to defend 'national' honour in the face of foreign and domestic depredations.
38. Herodotus, *The Histories*, tr. Aubrey de Selincourt (London: Penguin Classics, 1972), 240. It may also explain the later preoccupation with the Cyrus Cylinder as a 'charter of human rights'.
39. Both Handel (1728) and Rossini (1812) found time to compose operas on the theme of Cyrus. Rossini's opera, composed in honour of Napoleon, was focused on the emancipation of the Jews from Babylon.
40. See for example Malcolm op. cit., 113–14.
41. The value of the myths of the *Shahnameh* as a guide to good behaviour is noted by Dick Davis in the introduction to his translation of the *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* (New York: Penguin, 2006), xv.
42. More commonly known as the Name-ye Bastan. See M. Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Historiography and crafting of Iranian national identity', in T. Atabaki (ed.), *Iran in the Twentieth Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 9.
43. *Kaveh*, 10 February 1921, 3. *Sahih* may be better translated as 'correct'.
44. A brief review of Herodotus would confirm any such suspicion. For a useful discussion of the ambiguous boundaries: see J. Mali, *Mythistory* (Chicago, University of

Chicago Press, 2003). For the medieval dimension in particular, see the excellent study by N. F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1991), especially ch. 6.

45. See, for example, *Kaveh*, 21 March 1920, 7–12; *Kaveh*, 22 January 1920, appendices.
46. The rediscovery of good manners/morals was central to the Enlightenment conception of function of history. See J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Narratives of Civil Government*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120–36. On Foroughi's motives, see Mohammad Ali Zaka ol Molk, 'Maqam arjomand Ferdowsi' ('The esteemed position of Ferdowsi'), in *Maqallat-e Foroughi*, vol. 2 (Tus, Tehran 1387/2008), 320.
47. Mohammad Ali Zaka ol Molk, op. cit., 317.
48. H. Taqizadeh, *Az Parviz ta Changiz* (Donya-ye Ketab, Tehran, 1382/2003), 185. On the absurdity of this, see L. I. Conrad, 'The Chain Topos', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 31 (2006), 7.
49. F. Adamiyyat, 'Problems in Iranian historiography', tr. T. M. Ricks, *Iranian Studies*, 4(4) (Autumn 1971), 142.
50. See above, note 9.
51. A. Zarrinkub, *Do Qarn Sokut* (Two Centuries of Silence) (Sokhan, Tehran, 1384/2006, 1st published 1957).
52. See, for example, the comments of H. Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 66–7.
53. *Two Centuries of Silence* was effectively rewritten in much more detail, and with more qualifications, as *Tarikh-e Iran bad az Islam* (The History of Iran after Islam) (Amir Kabir, Tehran 1362/1983), 685. More than 20 per cent of this study (pp. 17–154) focuses on source criticism.
54. *Shuresh bar Imtiyaznameh-ye Regie* (Rebellion against the Regie Concession) (Tehran 1360/1981). See in this regard A. Amanat, 'The study of history in post-revolutionary Iran: nostalgia, illusion, or historical awareness', *Iranian Studies*, 22(4) (1989), 10–11.
55. See H. Chehabi, 'The paranoid style in Iranian historiography', in T. Atabaki (ed.), *Iran in the Twentieth Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 162–3.
56. G. Mehran, 'Socialization of schoolchildren in the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 22(1) (1989), 37. See also Khomeini's directive quoted in K. S. Aghaie, *Islamist Historiography in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, 244–7; and in T. Atabaki, *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 237–8.
57. J. Ahmad, *Plagued by the West*, tr. Paul Sprachman, *Bibliotheca Persica*, 4 (New York: Columbia University, 1982), 28. See also in this respect the excellent article by Anja Pistor-Hatam, 'Writing back? Jalal Al-e Ahmad's (1923–1969) reflections on selected periods of Iranian history', *Iranian Studies*, 40(5) (December 2007), 559–78.
58. M. Khatami, Hezareh-ye Gofetgu va tafahom (A Thousand Discussions and Understandings) (Resaneh: Tehran, 1378/1999), 47–59.
59. Speech of Mohammad Khatami to the UNGA, New York, 21 September 1998, available at www.parstimes.com/history/khatami_speech_un.html. The Persian text can be located in M. Khatami, *Hezareh-ye Gofetgu va tafahom*, 47–59.

60. Although Khatami never publicly articulated the view, implicit in this philosophy of history and development was the acceptance that Iran had somehow been diverted from the natural or divine course of historical development towards liberty. In this sense, Khatami and his intellectual allies were profoundly Hegelian.
61. H. Chehabi, 'The paranoid style in Iranian historiography', in T. Atabaki, *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 155–76. See A. Amanat, 'Messianic aspirations in Contemporary Iran', in *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 230.

2

History, national identity and myths in the Iranian contemporary political thought: Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh (1812–78), Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani (1853–96) and Hassan Taqizadeh (1878–1970)

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The history of political thought relates to the responses developed regarding the issues gradually raised by social groupings, in terms of power, government, organisation, consensus, distribution of tasks and resources.[1] Political thought often reflects and emerges most succinctly in the hands of theorists and intellectuals as they grapple and contemplate socio-political issues.[2] One of the most efficient methods of understanding the cultural and socio-political context of a nation, in any determined era, is to study the theories and the ideas that its intelligentsia developed and elaborated. The origins of political ideas therefore offer valuable frameworks with which to examine a society. Relevant to the understanding of political thought of modern Iran is the study of the power of political myth.

The concept of political myth is regarded by political scientists Ernst Cassirer and György Lukàs as an abnormal phenomenon; they argue for it to be excluded from the range of instruments of political analysis. However, in the instance of Iran there is a compelling case for agreeing with Georges Sorel and Norberto Bobbio, who consider that political myth is an important reality which is deserving of accurate analysis. As Bobbio *et al.* argue: 'Political myths are completely present in the modern era, because the mythical and rational knowledge coexist in the psychological structure of man.'[3] They go on: 'Political myth shows how rational and practical purposes are normally pursued with greater effectiveness, using fantastic and emotional arguments.'[4]

The political thought of three of the most notable Persian intellectuals of the modern period – Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh[5] (1812–78), Mirza Aqa Khan

Kermani[6] (1853–96) and Hassan Taqizadeh (1878–1970) – provides insights into political myth and its contribution to the idea of nation and nationalism in Iran. The focus of this chapter is therefore on the contribution these three intellectuals made to the evolution of nationalism in modern Iran, with specific reference to the way political myth influenced their thought through a study of their writings. For this reason the first part of this research has been devoted to bibliographic research, selecting those texts and discourses in which it is possible to find important elements of their political ideas.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Persian political theorists started to develop their critical perception of the social, economical and political issues in Iran, giving life to a new current of thought that started to re-evaluate the roles of Persian history, national identity and myths in their political theories. After being in contact with the liberal and constitutional ideas of Western thinkers, Akhundzadeh, Kermani and Taqizadeh reconsidered Persian history and philosophy, working out a new way of thinking that created the ideological basis for Iranian Constitutional Movement of 1906 and for the first attempt at secularisation of Iranian society. These theorists put forward constitutionalist and liberal ideas for the first time in Iranian contemporary history. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution (*Mashruteh*) of 1906 was partly the fruit of the ideas of these theorists, who had been able to spread a new civil concept of the state which separated religion from politics, by introducing the rule of law and limiting the absolute power of the monarch.[7] This current of thought encouraged the concept of constitutionalism, nationalism and liberalism in contemporary Iran. Their ideas were developed and elaborated, during the first half of the twentieth century, and this generated new secular political attitudes and visions within Iranian society. The foundation of the National Front of Iran under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddeq in the 1950s was a clear sign of the strength of the idea of liberal nationalism in the political parties of Iran, which wanted to bring about a fully representative democracy through effective liberal views, based on patriotic values.[8]

Akhundzadeh, Kermani and Taqizadeh brought the pre-Islamic Iranian history and mythology, such as Cyrus the Great's 'ideal government' and the revolutionary myth of Kaveh from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, into their political thought, linking the idea of Persian patriotism to political concepts such as liberty and democracy. Kermani, for example, devotes an entire text, entitled *Name-ye Bastan* (The Ancient Letter), to the history of ancient Persia. He particularly focuses on the Achaemenid dynasty, describing Kurosh (Cyrus) as 'the founder of Iranian grandeur'. He states:

> His government was based on justice and equality, and for this reason history baptised him as a 'prophet'. His personality became so notable because he never abused his

> power and treated the defeated monarchs as his political allies. The reign of Kurosh was based on social justice and on the freedom of expression and faith.[9]

From these sentences it is possible to deduce Kermani's deep admiration of Kurosh's 'ideal government'. Kermani, who could be considered one of the fathers of Iranian nationalism, also sees Zoroastrian philosophy and the Persian mythology of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* as the basis of Iranian nationalism or 'Iranism'. In his writings he greatly admires Ferdowsi, calling him 'Pakzad' (noble spirit), praising him as the one who realised the Persian cultural revival.

Kermani is well acquainted with Western enlightenment political thought, and is completely aware of the socio-cultural and political development of some European states such as France and Great Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[10] This leads him to express his disappointment for the cultural backwardness and obscurantism of the Persian society of his time. Kermani often invites the Persians to react against their unhappy political situation by trying to bring their country towards prosperity: to give them more motivation and to encourage them to believe in their potential to reach social and political developments. He reminds Iranians of their historical noble origins, which are traceable particularly to the 'ideal' reign of Cyrus the Great. At first, Kermani converts the myths of the Cyrus 'ideal government' to a political prospective and, in the next step, transforms this prospective to a political ideology which is potentially able to generate concrete social movements in Iran:

> Oh Iranian people! Try to know your ancient history, when Iran was the heart of the world, enlightening it as a candle. Today you have forgotten your origins and sit in a corner like an ill person, thinking only of personal interests. Previously you were the font of knowledge and advanced in science and technique. Now, instead, you are withered by ignorance and obscurity […] Oh sons of this chaotic Iran: the people in the world have successfully freed themselves from the chains of ignorance and slavery, going towards progress, freedom and equality. While we transformed the 'ideal reign' (of Kurosh) to a dark cemetery. We are a sleepy nation, while others are awake. Look at how the spirit of freedom, justice and constitutionalism has already spread throughout the world. Then wake up and commit yourselves to realising a new political government, to make a free and dignified Iran.[11]

Even though the political discourse of Kermani is slightly rhetorical, it expresses how political myth and nationalism are linked in his thought. The 'desirable reign' of Kurosh is seen as the 'lost terrestrial paradise', where everything was perfect and human values such as justice, freedom and peace were present.

Kermani, also influenced by the thought of Montesquieu, based his thinking on the principle of relativity of laws and religions. He argues that when political and

religious power conform to the customs, history and nature of nations, following a rational logic and founded on the principle of justice, they may contribute significantly to human development and the promotion of peaceful cohabitation. Otherwise both will give rise to the worst political system, which is indeed despotism. In support of this idea, Kermani gives the example of Persian history, recalling that

> when the government, in the age of Cyrus, followed the nature of its people, it managed to achieve a government that has remained well-known in history. While when Persian governments, in other eras, have forgotten the nature of their people, they have fallen into the darkness of tyranny.[12]

Kermani starts his book by remembering this glorious past and invites Iranians to recover it – he moves between myth and reality, past and present, always striving for a shining future. He compares the backward Iran of the mid-nineteenth century to an ill and drunk person who has lost his way, but at the same time calls the young Iranians to overcome this illness by fighting tyranny; to regain their 'lost terrestrial paradise' represented by Cyrus' 'ideal government'. This affirmation by Kermani recalls the political myth of the foundation of the 'Roman Empire' in which the identity of Roman people was formed by using the ancient Greek and Etruscan myths and its linking to the Latin myths such as Romulus and Remus, and which enabled them to fight to become an independent power. After the fall of the Roman Empire its power and glory became an effective political myth for future generations like that of the Holy Roman and Byzantine Empires. Kermani wants to use the myth of the ancient Persian Empire, whose main symbol is Cyrus and his 'ideal government', to communicate with his people, awaking their national consciousness for the achievement of a constitutional state.[13]

Kermani's nationalism, articulated in his political language, uses terminology such as 'Sons of Iran', and completely dispenses with Islamic terminology such as 'umma' or 'Muslims'. The concepts of *Vatan* (homeland) and *Vatankhah* (patriot) are often placed in his political writings, in which he attempts to rebuild a romantic idea of the Persian homeland. His thinking re-evaluates the pre-Islamic Iranian civilisation as distinct from the Arab-Islamic one.[14] He laid the foundations of Persian nationalism of the first half of the twentieth century, which became, with the ascension to the throne of Reza Shah in 1925, one of the founding political ideologies of the Pahlavi's dynasty.[15] Kermani sees in nationalism a significant potential for creating common political identity among Iranians and in opposition to despotism. He uses several popular patriotic metaphors – for instance: 'Where are the celestial lions whom, at any moment that the land of Iran was in danger, would have saved it from the clutches of foxes?'[16] According to Kermani, nationalism is one of the most important

political instruments available to the enlightened elite to waking up the people against the despotic rulers.

Considering that in the mid-nineteenth century Iran was still a traditional and religious country, where Islam was very respected and the concept of nation and nationalism were absent, it is possible to recognise that Kermani was one of the first intellectuals who started to abandon the Islamic use of language, adopting a new way of political communication that was based on 'Iranic' thought and terminologies.[17] National identity and Persian mythology became to Kermani the base for the political ideology of liberal-nationalism in Persia.

Like Kermani, Akhundzadeh also sees in the myth of Cyrus' 'ideal government' a possible way to introduce liberal political concepts and principles in Iranian traditional society of the time. At first he tries to examine the reasons that gradually caused the regression of Persian society. In his historical studies, Akhundzadeh considers the Arab invasion of Persia as the beginning of the decline of Iran and its developed civilisation. He also admires the ancient Achaemenids' Empire. The following paragraph shows his deep esteem of ancient Persian history:

> Oh Iran! I think about those times when your kings were wise and just and were controlling all the East and the West. Their buildings were full of skilled political advisors whose main function was to help the king to govern the Empire. In those days the common people had the opportunity to visit the King and communicate their problems personally. The governors were trying to respect the equality and the justice in their reigns, and the people had freedom.[18]

The reign discussed by Akhundzadeh is the Cyrus government and the Empire is the Achaemenid one. Akhundzadeh, like Kermani, considers the Cyrus reign the 'ideal government'. He also idealises the myth of Cyrus, trying to use it as a perfect political model. After describing the 'ideal government of Cyrus', Akhundzadeh focuses on the contemporary socio-political situation of Iran:

> What a pity for you, my Iran! Your land is ruined, your inhabitants ignore the civilisation of the world and are victims of despotism. The injustice which governs your land, together with the extremism of the clergy, caused your current fragile situation. These two elements took away your courage and your knowledge, bringing you into the reign of ignorance and falsity. If you won't be able to come out from such stationary status, it will require hundreds of years to reach a prosperous civilisation.[19]

In this political discourse it is also possible to notice a form of rhetoric that highlights the drama of Iranian society. Akhundzadeh tried, by the use of the mythical figure of Kurosh and his 'ideal government', to create a new current of thought in which political concepts such as freedom, justice and peaceful cohabitation became central and acceptable for the traditional Persian society.

The myth of Kurosh somehow acted as a basis for the creation of a new patriotic political ideology in nineteenth-century Iran, also influencing important political components of the first Iranian Constitutional Movement of 1906.

In 1916 Hassan Taqizadeh (1878–1970), another contemporary Persian secular intellectual, who founded one of the first modern political parties in Iran, *Ferqe-ye Democrat-e Iran* (the Democratic Party of Iran), started to publish a political and cultural magazine entitled *Kaveh*, which was financed by the German government and published in Berlin. *Kaveh* covered topics concerned with political, social and cultural issues. It was disseminated in Europe and Iran, and its main purpose was to found, in the Persian conscience, a national identity, which was based on the modern political principles: national identity, as sponsored by *Kaveh* magazine, was directed to promote the independence and the modernisation of Iran.[20]

Taqizadeh explained the reason for his choice of Kaveh, the mythological Persian hero, for the magazine with the following sentences: 'Considering the fact that, at this moment in Persia, there are no figures such as Fereydoun, hence it's necessary that all Iranian people, follow the example of Kaveh when he overthrew the Zahhak's tyranny, trying to overthrow the current royal family' (the Qajar dynasty). Taqizadeh considers Kaveh as a liberator who would have, also in the modern age, resisted against colonialism and any type of despotism, and tried to achieve national sovereignty. The cover of the magazine had the iconography of Kaveh, showing him with his *derafsh* (apron) in his hand, while he leads the Persian revolution against the Arabic tyrant Zahhak. The iconography represents the romantic figure of the revolutionary hero combating against injustice. Taqizadeh subscribes the theory of Georges Sorel, who states: 'An organization of images is able to conjure up all the instinctively revolutionary sentiments of one nation.'[21] Taqizadeh, by using the political myth of the revolutionary Kaveh, attempted to assist the political and social development of Iranians through the publication.

For Taqizadeh, Kaveh is the revolutionary hero fighting against a tyrannical regime for which a blossoming of peaceful civilization is its end:

> The Iranian nation, the most glorious of the ancient times, was a contemporary of the great democracies of Athen and Sparta, of the Babylon Reign and Lidia and of the Prophets Daniel and Ezra. It created great empires and generated notable kings such as Cyrus and Cambise, great legislators such as Darius and prophets such as Zoroaster and Mani, the first socialist of the history Mazdak together with notable poets such as Saadi, Hafez, Ferdowsi and Omar Khayyam, and philosophers such as Avicenna. Due to this Persia is still potentially able to contribute to the peaceful civilisation of the world, but only if it will have the opportunity to regain its lost freedom.[22]

Kaveh is also a common blacksmith who comes from the heart of the people – an ordinary worker and inhabitant of society. According to Ferdowsi's mythology, when Iran is completely dominated by despotism, Kaveh will start the revolution against the despot. He invites all other Iranians to join him in overthrowing despotism and, with the support of all the population and the important intervention of the other hero of this story, Fereydoun, he will manage to overcome obscurity, bringing back the light of freedom. Taqizadeh knew how well the Ferdowsi epic was known and appreciated by Iranians. As one of the most important symbols and heroes of this epic, Kaveh is the source of stimulation for the achievement of freedom and democracy in early twentieth-century Iran. In Taqizadeh's political thought, nationalism, represented particularly by the ancient Persian myths, is one of the key factors in bringing the people towards a new and modern political system. The Persians can reach modernity only if they are aware of their historical background and their contribution to world civilisation.

Taqizadeh wrote numerous political, social and cultural articles and also many political speeches, which makes it possible to construct a detailed picture of his political theories and ideas. He published articles in many Iranian magazines, such as *Neda-ye Vatan* (The Voice of the Nation), *Sur-e Esrafil* (Trumpet of Esrafil), *Mosavat* (Equality) and *Kaveh*.[23] It is also possible to find some of his writings in French and English. During a spell of almost two years in the United States, Taqizadeh, in 1913–14, published four articles in the *Revue du Monde Musulman*, where he dealt with political issues regarding Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. However, *Kaveh* magazine contains the greatest number of political texts by Taqizadeh. In *Kaveh*, he went a step further than Akhundzadeh and Kermani: he considered society ready to move from theory to action. Taqizadeh wanted to encourage the constitution of social and political movements and parties, ready to influence and to change Iranian political situation in the first half of the twentieth century.[24]

One of the main contributions of secular intellectuals such as Akhundzadeh, Kermani and Taqizadeh to contemporary political thought is that thanks to their ideas, different political parties and associations, whose main principles were based on freedom and democracy, were founded in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Iran. These political realities were mostly influenced by the new idea of Iranian nationalism, which was based on the Persian national identity and mythology, partly represented by important symbols such as the 'ideal government' of Kurosh and the revolutionary myth of Kaveh. Akhundzadeh, Kermani and Taqizadeh have been fundamental to the formation and evolution of Iranian nationalism through the use of political myth as an important political framework for the construction and diffusion of national identity. Their final purpose is a modern political system based on freedom and democracy in Iran.

The myth, as Ernst Cassirer states:

> expresses the human will to refuse to accept the dramatic events of life such as death, poverty, famine and despotism. Even though the myth remains irrational, it tries, in an unsophisticated way, to communicate a particular vision of the world by stimulating human emotions, trying to bring them to act for a particular cause.[25]

The human visualises a desirable reign as an ideal place to attain a space where justice, peace and the constructive powers definitively replace the negative ones. The ideal reign will be reached at the end of time by the human being; heroic figures will guide him to overthrow the negative powers of despotism. This type of myth, which envisages the arrival of a decisive moment in human history in which (by the help of a heroic figure) the human being will be freed from the chains of obscurity, discovering a messianic reign, is classified as the 'myth of liberation'. It has an apocalyptic vision of history and maintains that, after the final battle between good and bad, a new earth and a new sky will be born, and there will no longer be any space for tears and blood. The 'myth of liberation' constitutes one of the most important parts of Persian mythology,[26] which, both in its pre-Islamic and post-Islamic literature, finds a need for heroes who will one day come to save the people from injustice and despotism.

According to Coupe: 'there are three important terms to examine, when we study the phenomenon of myth: paradigm, perfection and possibility'.[27] The first expresses the model we want to reach, the second is the concrete achievement of such a model and the last one expresses the present potentiality for realising it. In the political thought of Akhundzadeh, Kermani and Taqizadeh, it is possible to find the 'paradigm' in *Avesta* and *Shahnameh*, 'perfection' in the 'ideal government' of Cyrus the Great and 'possibility' in the revolutionary myth of Kaveh.

As Ernst Cassirer argues:

> in critical moments of the political and social life of human beings, the myth regains its ancient power. In fact, it had always been ready under the surface, waiting for the right moment and occasion. This moment arrives when the other connective forces of our associated life are in crisis and cannot balance the demonic power of myth.[28]

This is what also happened in Iran from the mid-nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century. In one of the most critical moments of Iranian history (the Qajar dynasty), this group of theorists and intellectuals made Persian ancient mythology the centre of their attention, in an attempt to bring about a renaissance in Iran, by helping society to progress towards modernity. These attempts, for different historical and political reasons, were not completely successful, but managed to lay the foundations for a new wave in the future of

Iran in which secular and modern values, based also on Iranian patriotism, could become central again to Iranian political life.

Notes

1. L. Firpo, *Storia delle idee politiche, economiche e sociali* (Turin: Utet, 1972), vol. 1, xii.
2. Ibid.; see also M. D'addio, *Appunti di Storia delle Dottrine Politiche, Ecig* (Genoa, 1980).
3. N. Bobbio, N. Matteucci and G. Pasquino, *Dizionario di Politica* (Turin: Utet, 1983), 644.
4. Ibid.
5. F. Adamiyyat, *Andisheha-ye Fath'ali Akhundzadeh* (The Political Thoughts of Fath'ali Akhundzadeh) (Tehran: Kharazmi Press, 1978).
6. F. Adamiyyat, *Andisheha-ye Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani* (The Political Thoughts of Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani) (Tehran: Payam Press, 1978).
7. On Iranian Constitutional Revolution, see E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); F. Adamiyyat, *Fekr-e demokrasi-e egtema'i dar nahdat-e masrutiyat-e Iran* (The social and democratic political thought in Iranian Constitutional Movement) (Entesharat-e Payam, Tehran, 1984); M. R. Afshari, 'The historians of the Constitutional Movement and the making of Iranian populist tradition', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 25(3) (August 1993); A. Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashrute-ye Iran* (The History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution) (Tehran: Negah, 2002); M. Agiodani, *Mashrute-ye Irani* (The Iranian Constitutionalism) (Tehran: Akhtaran Press, 2004).
8. M. Kamrava, *Revolution in Iran: The Roots of Turmoil* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 56–8; S. Siavoshi, *Liberal Nasionalism dar Iran* (The Liberal–Nationalism in Iran) (Tehran: Centre of Islamic and Iranian Studies, 2001), 55–6; See also S. Zabih, *The Mosaddegh Era* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1982); G. Nejati, *Mosaddegh, Salhai-ye Mobarezeh va Moghavemat* (The Years of Struggle and Resistance) (Tehran: Ghazal, 1998).
9. F. Adamiyyat, op. cit., 165.
10. Ibid., 153.
11. Ibid., 282–3.
12. M. A. Kermani, *Sad Khetabeh* (Hundred Discourses), Istanbul, n.d., discourse n. 14.
13. N. Bobbio, N. Matteucci and G. Pasquino, op. cit., 642.
14. M. A. Kermani, *Tarikh-e Iran-e Bastan* (The Ancient Persian History) (Tehran, 1947), 577–8.
15. P. M. Bayat, 'The concepts of religion and government in the thought of Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, a nineteenth-century Persian revolutionary', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5(4) (September 1974), 382: 'Kermani was first and foremost a Persian nationalist. His struggle was in the name of Iran and not Islam, which he came to blame for the political downfall of the Persians.'
16. M. A. Kermani, *Tarikh-e Iran-e Bastan* (The Ancient Persian History), op. cit., 368.

17. F. Adamiyyat, *Andisheha-ye Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani* (The Political Thoughts of Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani), op. cit., 13–14.
18. F. Adamiyyat, *Andishehaie Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadeh* (The Political Thoughts of Fath'ali Akhundzadeh) (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1970), 123.
19. F. Adamiyyat, *Andishehaie Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadeh* (The Political Thoughts of Fath'ali Akhundzadeh), op. cit., 122.
20. N. R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots And Results of Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 71, 74; ibid., 74: 'The German sent money to Iran and in 1915 invited Hasan Taqizadeh to Berlin to create a Persian committee to disseminate propaganda and possibly create a nationalist government. Taqizadeh's review *Kaveh*, 1916–22, was widely read in Iran. His co-workers included important writers like Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, son of Jamal al-Din Esfahani, and Hosein Kazemzadeh, later editor of another nationalist paper, *Iranshahr.*'
21. N. Bobbio, N. Matteucci and G. Pasquino, op. cit., 639.
22. N. R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, op. cit., 52.
23. H. Taqizadeh, *Kaveh: Berlin, 1916–1922 mo'asses va modir Hasan Taqizadeh. Ba moqaddame, fehrest va mondarejat as Iraj Afshar* (Kaveh: Berlin, 1916–22 Founder and Director Hasan Taqizadeh. With the Introduction and Comments of Iraj Afshar) (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1977).
24. S. H. Jousefi, *Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh: a Political Biography in the Context of Iranian Modernization*, Masters thesis (University of Utrecht, the Netherlands, 1988), www.let.uu.nl, 48–9. See also I. Afshar, *Zendeghi-ye tufani: khaterat-e Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh* (The stormy life: the memories of Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh) (Tehran: Entesharat-e Elmi, 1993); T. Epkenhans, *Moral und Disziplin: Seyyed Hasan Taqizade und die Konstruktion eines 'progressiven Selbst' in der frühen iranischen Moderne* (Berlin: Scwarz, 2005); A. Alawi, *Zendeghi va zamane-ye Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh* (The life and the era of Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh) (Tehran: Mo'assese-ye Motale'at va Pajuhesg-e Siasi, 2006).
25. E. Cassirer, *Simbolo, mito e cultura* (Rome: Bari, Laterza, 1985), 241; see also D. Cuppit, *The World to Come* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 29.
26. The main fonts for studying the Persian mythology are the divine Zoroastrian book, *Avesta*, and the epic book of *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi (940–1021). Some parts of *Avesta*, such as Yašt, narrate mythological Persian stories which mostly date back to the pre-Zoroastrian era. In these stories there are a series of divine and human glorious figures that are opposing the evil forces, eliminating them through the courage of heroes. *Shahnameh* is another very important source for Persian mythology: it consists of many epic stories in which Persian heroes and kings are fighting for the well-being of the world and to establish prosperity. Ferdowsi, who wrote *Shahnameh* three and a half centuries after the Arabic invasion of Persia, tried, through these epic tales, to exalt Persian national identity and patriotism. See A. V. Williams Jackson, *Zoroaster: The Prophet of Ancient Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1901); C. I. Huart and L. Delaporte, *L'Iran antique: Élam et Perse et la civilisation iranienne* (Paris: A. Michel, 1952); H. Corbin, *Corpo spirituale e Terra celeste* (Milan: Adelphi, 1986); V. Sarkhosh Curtis, *Persian Myths* (trad. in Persian, Abbas Mokhabber) (Tehran: Markaz, 1994); J. Dustkhah, *Avesta*,

vols 1–2 (Tehran: Morvarid, 1998); J. Ashtiani, *Zartosht: Mazdisna va Hokumat (Zoroastro e il governo)* (Tehran: Enteshar, 2002). A. Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* (translated by Dick Davis) (New York: Viking, 2006).

27. L. Coupe, *Il Mito, Teorie e storie* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005), xv. See also M. G. Pelayo, *Miti e simboli politici* (Turin: Borla, 1970).
28. E. Cassirer, op. cit., 250.

3

Ancient Iran in the imagination of the medieval West

Robert Bartlett

Iran did not loom particularly large in the medieval Western imagination. It was there, of course, as part of a huge Muslim world about which the West had some knowledge and much prejudiced fantasy. Crusade chroniclers often talk about 'Persians' – sometimes with precision, sometimes generically. Fulcher of Chartres, one of the most important historians of the First Crusade (in which he participated), calls the Seljuk Sultan 'king of the Persians' and 'emperor of Persia', and refers to the Turks as 'a Persian people' or 'a Parthian people'.[1] Given the political geography of the year 1100, with Seljuk rule extending from central Asia to the Mediterranean, and the strong Persian cultural influence on the Seljuks, Fulcher's labelling is quite comprehensible. Specific geographical regions could also sometimes be indicated. Khurasan, for example, appears frequently in both the crusade chronicles and Western vernacular epics, as a reservoir of Saracen manpower and the most distant frontier of the Muslim world.[2] And in the late thirteenth century there was that amazing period when Western Christian powers sought to establish links with the Ilkhans. Papal missions to Tabriz and Ilkhanid (usually Nestorian) envoys in Rome marked a particularly active phase of relations at this time. The accounts of the travel expenses for the king of England's envoy who visited Tabriz in 1292 still survive in the archives. The envoy was, incidentally, the son of the man charged with putting down the Welsh, so the family certainly had opportunities, even if there was not necessarily the inclination, to indulge in some interesting comparative ethnography – a topic (comparative ethnography) which will recur here.[3]

The focus of this chapter is not on such contemporary perceptions and relations, but rather on the place of traditions about pre-Islamic Iran in the learned world of the medieval West. Some big subjects under this heading must be excluded, for reasons of space: for example, the vast corpus of material relating to Alexander the Great, which necessarily involved the Persians, although

this is particularly regrettable, since much of this literature is illustrated and hence leads to the interesting question of the pictorial representation of alien ethnicity.[4] Nor is it possible to consider here the Persian conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and the subsequent recovery of the city, along with the relic of the True Cross, by the emperor Heraclius, although this had a deep importance for later Christian thinkers. It was an event commemorated throughout the Latin Christian world on 14 September – the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross – and would have been a far more familiar landmark in their received history than those other supposed triumphs against the Iranian threat: Marathon, Salamis or Thermopylae.[5] The thirteenth-century Old French chronicle of the crusades is called *L'Estoire d'Eracles* – 'The History of Heraclius' – because that is where it starts its story.[6]

Instead of surveying this wide terrain, this chapter investigates what a literate and energetic Western historian of the twelfth century could find out about ancient Iran, using as its primary case study the monastic writer, Hugh of Fleury.[7] He was a monk of Fleury in northern France, one of the most important Benedictine foundations in Europe, and produced his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ecclesiastical History) in 1110, dedicating it to Adela of Blois, daughter of William the Conqueror. It begins with the legendary Ninus, King of Assyria, and goes down to the ninth century. Some 60 manuscripts of Hugh's *History* survive in various recensions, which means it was a comparatively successful piece of historical writing.[8]

Knowledge of ancient Iranian civilisation and history passed westwards through a series of filters or lenses that were both linguistic and cultural. Of primary importance were the Hebrew and the Greek. The first was, relatively speaking, fairly direct, and mostly favourable. The Hebrew Bible portrays Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire, as a liberator and the ruler who had enabled the restoration of Temple worship in Jerusalem. The story of Belshazzar's feast represents the Persian conquest of Babylonia as part of God's providential plan. In the book of Isaiah, God speaks to 'Cyrus, his anointed', promising 'to subdue nations before him'.[9] All this was familiar to the scholars and churchmen of Christendom, even if they did not know that Cyrus had returned the captive images of the gods to their own localities after his conquest of Babylon, as attested by a surviving cuneiform text (now often referred to, with some exaggeration, as the first Declaration of Human Rights).[10] Basing themselves on the biblical reference to Cyrus as 'anointed', medieval exegetes commonly interpreted the Persian king allegorically as Christ. 'Our Lord, whom king Cyrus signified both in his name and in bringing freedom from captivity', as the ninth-century abbot Rabanus Maurus put it.[11]

A rather different tradition – and a rather different Cyrus – can be found amongst the Greeks. The first and most important Greek text opening on the

Iranian world is, of course, Herodotus, who announces in the initial words of his *Histories* that he is writing to secure the memory of 'the great and marvellous deeds of the Hellenes and the Barbarians and the causes why these waged war with one another' – a perspective still alive in the execrable film *300*, or under a more academic disguise in Anthony Pagden's *Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle Between East and West*.[12]

Herodotus was not known in the medieval West, either in Greek or in Latin translation. Such material from his text as had made its way into Western authors came via the late Latin encyclopaedists and anthologisers. This is absolutely typical. The Western Middle Ages had no direct acquaintance with what are now considered the great literary triumphs of ancient Greek culture, such as Herodotus or Homer or the Athenian dramatists – including of course Aeschylus' *Persians*, which is exhibit one in Edward Said's catalogue of orientalism.[13] When the scholars of Western Europe first became interested in translating ancient Greek texts, in the twelfth century, what they wanted was strictly practical: science, medicine, astronomy, mathematics.

Direct knowledge of Herodotus came West only in the fifteenth century. Italian manuscript collectors travelling to Greece in the 1420s brought the first manuscripts of the Greek text to Western Europe.[14] A Latin translation by the famous humanist scholar Lorenzo Valla was printed in 1474, and soon afterwards the poet Boiardo, author of *Orlando innamorato*, made an Italian version (although it was not printed until some time after his death).[15] West Europeans could now have direct access to the text that might be considered the major ancient source for the history of the Persian Empire and its world.

Before that time, however, the great reservoir of eastern material in Herodotus could only reach the West through little streams, channels that were almost blocked and rivulets which sometimes seem to disappear. The paths of transmission can be illustrated by one story. It is quite a vivid story, with a barbarian queen and a bucket of blood, and it clearly captured the imagination of Westerners who learned about it, either in the indirect way during the medieval centuries, or directly after the recovery of Herodotus. It was in fact the subject of paintings by many early modern artists, including Rubens (his version is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

The story concerns the death of Cyrus. Herodotus writes:

> Now Cyrus set his heart on bringing the Massagetae under him. This people is said to be numerous and brave, dwelling eastwards towards the rising sun, beyond the river Araxes [which modern commentators identify as the Jaxartes or Syr Darya] […] there are those who say they are a Scythian people [1. 201].
>
> There was a queen of the Massagetae, her husband having died. Her name was Tomyris [1. 205].

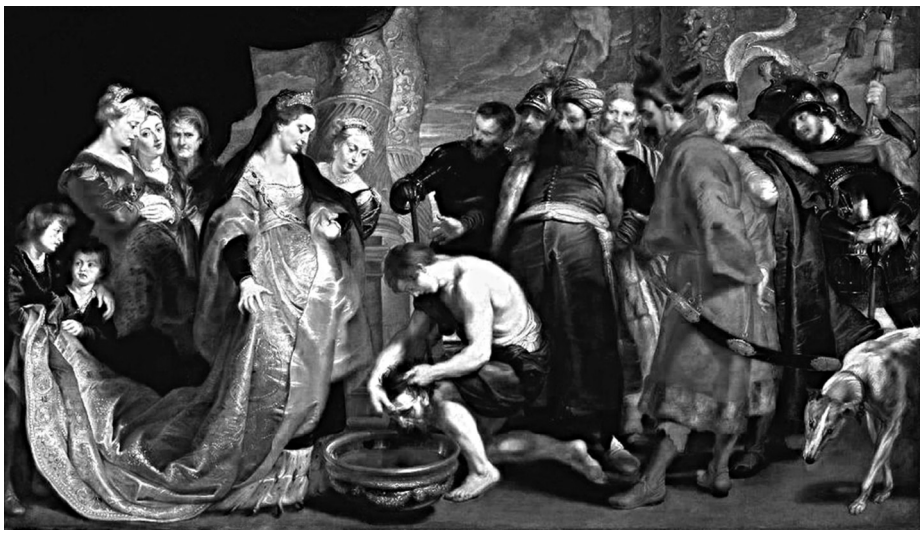

Figure 3.1: Head of Cyrus brought to Queen Tomyris (Peter Paul Rubens).

The story continues when Cyrus begins bridging the Araxes; Tomyris offers to withdraw her troops to allow him to cross, possibly out of vainglory, perhaps as a strategic ploy to get the river behind him; he agrees and crosses; the Persians then set out a lavish banquet in the open, and withdraw; the Massagetan troops, commanded by Queen Tomyris' son, advance, find the banquet, and feed and drink until comatose; Cyrus then returns and kills or captures them; Tomyris' son is a prisoner:

> When she learned what had happened to her army and to her son, she sent a herald to Cyrus with this message: 'Cyrus, never glutted with blood, do not be elated over what you have done […] give me back my son and leave this country without loss […] If you do not do this, I swear to you by the sun, the Lord of the Massagetae, I will sate you with blood, however greedy you be' [1. 212].

Cyrus ignores the message; the queen's captive son manages to kill himself; she launches an attack; the Persians are defeated and Cyrus killed:

> Filling a wineskin with human blood, Tomyris sought the corpse of Cyrus among the Persian dead, and, when she found it, she plunged his head into the wineskin, abusing the body and saying, 'I am alive and victorious in battle but you have destroyed me, taking away my son by a ruse. I glut you with blood, as I threatened' [1. 214].

That is the story as told by Herodotus; it occurs in almost exactly the same form, though in far fewer words, in Hugh of Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History*.[16] How did

this ancient melodramatic anecdote reach a studious monk in northern France in the twelfth century? The transmission is as follows: from Herodotus, writing in the mid-fifth century BC, the story passed to various later Greek historians, and from them to Pompeius Trogus, who turned it into Latin around 10 BC. Trogus was the basis of Justin's epitome, probably compiled *c.*300, and of the version in Orosius, *c.*400, both authors available to Hugh of Fleury when he was writing around 1110.

It is a long chain. The crucial step of bringing the material from Greek into Latin was made by Pompeius Trogus, author of a huge, now lost history.[17] Although he was a Gaul, from southern France, Pompeius Trogus read Greek and assembled much of his material from Greek sources, although which ones he used is a much debated and undecided question.[18] Obviously, these sources in their turn knew the story in Herodotus. Although Trogus' work does not survive, at some point in the later centuries of the Roman Empire a writer called Justin made a selective summary. This does survive, and there was indeed a manuscript of Justin's work at Fleury, Hugh's monastery.[19] The Fleury manuscript dates to the ninth century, the so-called Carolingian Renaissance, a crucial period in European cultural history when ancient Latin literature was either copied or disappeared forever. But Hugh, in the twelfth century, is dependent for this particular story not on Justin directly but on Orosius, who incorporated much of Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, and produced the first Christian world history, written at the suggestion of St Augustine to refute the idea that the sack of Rome in 410 was a punishment for abandoning the old gods; Orosius' work survives in 250 manuscripts.[20]

Clearly one could devote a lot of time to analysis of the way this story changed over the centuries and between the languages – a topic as much of interest to narratologists as Iranologists. A comparison of the various successive versions shows three main processes: first, narrative invention. To take just one example: very quickly the suicide of Tomyris' son was replaced by his death in the battle – an excision of complicated and extraneous material that any adapter for the screen would understand. The second process is rhetorical colouring. In Justin's epitome: 'Tomyris did not pour out the grief of her loss in tears but turned her thoughts to the solace of vengeance.' Orosius makes this less abstract and more rhetorically forceful: 'she prepared to wash away her grief as mother and queen with the blood of her enemies rather than with her tears'. Some of these verbal changes may have an ideological edge. Justin has queen Tomyris confronting Cyrus' invasion boldly, 'not terrified like a woman', while Orosius drops the phrase 'not like a woman' at this point and moves it to describe her final rebuke to Cyrus' head. As a result, in Justin the queen transcends the weakness of her sex by being brave; in Orosius she transgresses against the tenderness a woman should display by ugly crowing over a defeated enemy – although both points

are conveyed by the same phrase (*non muliebriter*). And finally, as in all transmission of exotic material, there is hopeless confusion about names – even in the various manuscripts of Justin alone the river Araxes appears as Arxis, Soaxis, Oxxis and Oaxis. This is, of course, almost the essence of the exotic: since no one was using these texts to find their way to the river Araxes, all that mattered to those who lived by the Loire or the Thames was that the name should have an outlandish ring.

Knowledge of the story of Cyrus' head thus passed to the West in a quite characteristic way: through epitomisers and anthologists, translation from Greek to Latin, Christian reuse of non-Christian material, and survival through the copying activities of Carolingian monasteries. There is a long chain here. West European Christians of the ninth or the twelfth centuries saw themselves as standing in the tradition of late antique Christianity: the late antique Christians recognised their long Roman heritage, going back to pagan imperial times; and the pagan Romans of imperial times had decided (after some debate) that they were heirs to the Greeks. And the Greeks, of course, had had real contact with the Iranian world, even if it was often perceived through a distorting glass.

What a contrast there is with Byzantium, with its direct and unbroken access to the text of Herodotus. While the Latin West, largely ignorant of Greek, could catch a glimpse of the ancient Iranian world only through the Bible, or through late Roman encyclopaedists and anthologies, Herodotus was continually copied in Byzantium. Of the manuscripts used in the standard modern edition of Herodotus, one from the tenth century, three from the eleventh century and three from the fourteenth century have a Byzantine origin.[21] Consequently, the text could be cited directly. In one twelfth-century Byzantine poem, the story of Cyrus' head is used as a literary device in an attack on King Conrad III, a leader of the Second Crusade, and a man much distrusted by the Byzantines (I use the translation kindly provided by Professor Elizabeth Jeffreys):

> He [that is, Conrad], like Cyrus, was not yet sated with bloodshed and sought to be excessively intoxicated with it – may he share in the condemnation of Cyrus which Tomyris the Scythian queen adjudged, justly throwing his head into a skin which had been filled with blood, crying, 'Take your fill of blood, Cyrus', correctly aiming at the insatiable blood letter this saying, just like an arrow.[22]

There is no need here for a complex genealogy of narrative transmission. The poet, and one presumes his hearers, would know Herodotus directly, so this tale from the sixth or fifth century BC could be a natural, if erudite, allusion 1,500 years later. Without further explanation or reference, he could evoke the bloodthirsty Persian ruler in a hostile diatribe against a German crusading king.

Exotic narratives were not the only fragments to make their way from pre-Islamic Iran to the learned world of the medieval West. There was also a tradition which can be called (in a modest sense) ethnographic. It was transmitted by some of the same texts as the story of Cyrus' head, but was concerned not simply with a good story but with giving some idea of what a people were like – their ways, their customs, how they lived.

The main example explored here, although others could have been chosen, is the Parthians. This is what you could learn about the ancient Parthians if you were Latin-literate in twelfth-century Western Europe. You could acquire some knowledge of their dynastic history: Arsaces I (*c.*247–211 BC) was recognised as the founding father of the empire – 'no less memorable amongst the Parthians than Cyrus amongst the Persians, Romulus amongst the Romans, or Alexander amongst the Macedonians'.[23] You could, though, learn much more than that:

> We read that the Roman people divided rule over the world with the Parthians. But they were originally exiles from the Scythians, as is revealed by their name, for in the Scythian language exiles are called Parthi […] Their language is between Scythian and Median and mixed with them both. Their clothing is bright and flowing. They, unlike other peoples, have an army made up, not of free men, but of slaves, and they instruct them, with great diligence and with as much care as the free men, to ride and to shoot with the bow. Whoever is the most wealthy presents many horsemen to the king. But the slaves go on foot while the free men are borne by horses; they go to war on horseback, they feast on horseback, they fulfil their public and private duties on horseback. They fight either by galloping forward on their horses or by turning their backs; they often simulate flight and in the very heat of the struggle abandon the battle, and then, after flight, take up the fight again […] They do not know how to fight at close quarters in a battle line or to conquer cities by besieging them. They would be irresistible if their staying-power was as great as the force of their attack.[24]

There is much more, but this suffices as a taste of this material, found in Hugh of Fleury and dependent on Justin's epitome. These are some of the classic topics of pre-modern ethnography: origins, language, clothing and methods of warfare, including the famous Parthian ruse of the feigned flight. Worth mention is the kinship of the Parthians with the Scythians, and the vivid picture of Scythian nomadism to be found in this literary tradition: 'wandering through the uncultivated wilderness, not engaged in agriculture but carrying their wives and children with them in leather wagons […] their flocks and herds walk with them, they feed on milk and honey'.[25]

For the agricultural and urban societies of the ancient Mediterranean there was something fascinating about these wild and wandering folk, creaking across

the endless plains of central Asia in their covered wagons. These compelling traditions about Parthians and Scythians were passed down from the Greeks to the Romans and on to the medieval West, providing the learned men of the Middle Ages with a strongly delineated and usable image of a warlike, nomadic and pastoral society. It was an image that could also inform their perception of peoples closer to them in time and space, and one example of that process will be mentioned in conclusion.

Hugh of Fleury was an important historical source for Gerald of Wales, the late-twelfth-century scholar, cleric and polemicist, who is the first author to write a sustained description of the Welsh and the Irish.[26] For him there were modern Parthians. After describing the ancient Parthians in words borrowed from Hugh of Fleury, who had borrowed them from Justin's epitome of Trogus Pompeius, he goes on:

> Such was the bravery in arms of the Parthians of old, who indeed up to the present day have not degenerated in courage. As in these our own times in Palestine, where, by a hidden, but never unjust, judgment of God, they (alas!) obtained victory in open warfare over the Christian people.[27]

He is writing of Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem in 1187, an event that shocked and horrified Western churchmen, and identifying his army – a mixture of Turks, Kurds, Arabs and others – with the Parthians of the ancient world. In this particular context, the Muslim identity of the conquerors has been subordinated to a learned ethnographic tradition. Medieval chroniclers are notorious for their tendency to dress up contemporaries in classical or biblical garb; even Fulcher of Chartres, who was himself present in the Middle East and lived in the Crusader states, occasionally adopted this archaising trope and could write of the threat posed by 'the Parthians and Medes and Chaldeans'.[28] Educated Westerners always had this tendency to see the contemporary world through the lens of the classical literature they had absorbed in cloister or schoolroom.

Gerald of Wales was especially agile in ranging freely between ancient parallels and modern peoples – for instance, citing Caesar on the moustaches of the ancient Britons to illustrate the antiquity of the Welsh practice of his own day – and he was certainly familiar with the ethnography of Parthians and Scythians when he wrote his own works on the Welsh and Irish. A few quotations from his *Description of Wales*, written in 1194, will illustrate his ethnographic perspective. He notes the pastoral way of life of the Welsh: 'Almost the entire population is fed from flocks, barley, milk, cheese and butter; they eat a lot of meat but little bread […] they do not live in towns, villages or castles.'[29] And he has interesting comments on their methods of warfare:

> Not only the nobles but the whole people are trained in arms […] In warlike conflict they are the hardest of peoples in the first attack, but if resisted manfully, they easily fall into confusion […] In flight and defeat they turn and fight back in flight, as if with Parthian arrows shot behind.[30]

It is clearly not the case that twelfth-century observers were incapable of looking at the world around them and describing it; but they were also readers, and what they read informed and stimulated what they saw and what they wrote. The literary trail from ancient times led to their own libraries and gave them a rich stock, including (perhaps surprisingly) some material from ancient Iran. Narratives about Cyrus' head and strong images of Parthian nomadism were available as 'things to think with' in the world of the medieval West.

Notes

1. Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana* 1. 3, 15, 19; 3. 11, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), 133, 220, 242, 649.
2. Alan V. Murray, '*Coroscane*: homeland of the Saracens in the *Chansons de geste* and the historiography of the Crusades', in *Aspects de l'épopée romane: Mentalités. Idéologies. Intertextualités*, ed. Hans van Dijk and Willem Noomen (Groningen, 1995), 177–84.
3. Cornelio Desimoni, 'I conti dell'ambasciata al Chan di Persia nel MCCXCII', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, 13 (1877–84), 537–698; both father and son were called Geoffrey de Langley.
4. D. J. A. Ross, *Alexander Historiatus. A Guide to Medieval Illustrated Alexander Literature* (Warburg Institute Surveys 1, 1963) is a route-finder through this vast and complex material; for some comment on pictorial illustration of ethnic difference in the Middle Ages, see this author's 'Illustrating ethnicity in the Middle Ages', in Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler (eds), *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge, 2009), 132–56.
5. There is discussion and further bibliography in Louis Van Tongeren, *Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy* (Leuven, 2000).
6. *L'Estoire d'Eracles empereur et la conqueste de la terre d'Outremer*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux* 1–2 (1844–59); M. R. Morgan, *The Chronicle of Ernoul and the Continuations of William of Tyre* (Oxford, 1973).
7. *Hugonis Floriacensis […] Chronicon*, ed. Bernhard Rottendorff (Münster, 1638); excerpts ed. Georg Waitz, *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, *Scriptores* 9 (Hanover, 1851), pp. 337–64 (reprinted *Patrologia latina* 163 (Paris, 1854), cols 805–54); there is no complete modern edition.
8. L. M. De Ruiter, 'An indispensable manuscript for the reconstruction of the textual tradition of Hugh of Fleury's *Historia Ecclesiastica*: MS Vat. Reg. lat. 545', *Media Latinitas* (1996), 329–33, 329 n. 2.
9. Isaiah 45: 1.

10. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edn, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, 1969), 315–16; *Babylon: Myth and Reality*, ed. I. L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour (London, 2008), 171, fig. 161.
11. *Commentaria in libros II Paralipomenon* 1. 3, *Patrologia latina*, 109 (Paris, 1852), col. 301.
12. New York, 2008.
13. *Orientalism* (London, 1978), 21, 56.
14. Remigio Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, two vols (Florence, 1905–4), 1, 47 n. 32, 48, 49, 69 n. a.
15. *Herodoti Halicarnassei patris historiæ traductio e græco in latinum habita per Laurentium Vallensera* (Venice, 1474); *Herodoto Alicarnaseo historico delle guerre de Greci et de Persi, tradotto di greco in lingua italiana per il conte Mattheo Maria Boiardo* (Venice, 1533).
16. Hugh of Fleury (as in note 7), 30.
17. Justinus, *Epitoma historiarum philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, ed. Otto Seel (Stuttgart, 1972), 11–12; the story is in 1. 8.
18. Thérèse Liebmann-Frankfort, '*L'histoire des Parthes dans le livre XLI de Trogue Pompée: essai d'identification de ses sources*', *Latomus*, 28 (1969), 894–922.
19. 'Leiden, Voss. Lat. Q. 32 (S. IX[1]) and Paris n. a. lat. 1601 (S. IX[2/4] or IX med.) are both of Fleury origin': L. D. Reynolds (ed.), *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford, 1983), 198; the latter manuscript is listed under its old class mark, 'Laur. Ashburnham L 29', in Seel's edition (as in note 17); Marco Mostert, *The Library of Fleury: A Provisional List of Manuscripts* (Hilversum, 1989), includes the Leiden manuscript (99) but not the Paris one; for copying of Justin at this period, see B. Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins aux XIe et XIIe siècles 1: Catalogue des manuscrits classiques latins copiés du IXe au XIIe siècle: Apicius-Juvénal* (Paris, 1982), 537–51.
20. Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos*, ed. Marie-Pierre Arnuad-Lindet, 3 vols (Paris, 1990–1); the story is at 2. 7, vol. 1, 98–9.
21. *Herodoti Historiae*, ed. Karl Hude, 3rd edn, 2 vols (Oxford, 1927), i–ix.
22. *Manganeios Prodromos, Poems 20 and 24*, draft edition and tr. E. M. and M. J. Jeffreys (Oxford and Sydney, 1997), poem 20, page 4, lines 31–9.
23. Hugh of Fleury (as in note 7), 31.
24. Ibid., 28, 31.
25. Ibid., 29.
26. Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146–1223* (Oxford, 1982), reprinted, with supplementary bibliography, as *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Stroud, 2006).
27. Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis), *De principis instructione* 1. 14, in his *Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer *et al.* (8 vols, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* ('Rolls Series'), 1861–91), 8, 50–1.
28. Fulcher of Chartres (as in note 1) 2. 27, 468–70.
29. Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis), *Descriptio Kambriae* 1. 8, 17, in his *Opera* (as in note 27) 6, pp. 153–227, at pp. 179–80, 200.
30. Ibid., 1. 8; 2. 3, pp. 179, 209, 210.

4

History and chronology in early modern Iran: The Safavid Empire in comparative perspective

Stephen P. Blake

Islam introduced a new temporal order into the lands of seventh- and eighth-century Eurasia. In the Quran, Muhammad was commanded to reform the pagan lunisolar calendar and era that he had inherited:

> The number of months in the sight of Allah is twelve – so ordained by Him the day he created the heavens and the earth […] *Verily nasi* [the intercalation of a month] is an addition to unbelief: The Unbelievers are led to wrong thereby.[1]

This prohibition was later repeated by the prophet: 'Oh People, the unbelievers indulge in tampering with the calendar in order to make permissible that which Allah forbade, and to forbid that which Allah has made permissible. With Allah the months are twelve in number.'[2]

While a lunar calendar was not uncommon in the first millennium of the Common Era, a strictly lunar era was. The Jews, Romans and Arabs, all of whom employed lunar calendars of one sort or the other, numbered their years according to an era that was lunisolar. That is, since a lunar year had approximately 354 days and a solar year approximately 365, every third year a 13th month was added to the lunar calendar in order to keep the days and months in rough synchronisation with the seasons. In the radical reorganisation of time introduced by the new religion, however, no intercalation was allowed. Allah had explicitly forbade it.

In the first decade after the prophet's death the years following his migration (*hijri*) from Mecca to Medina were given names rather than numbers – the second year (2 AH, AD 623) was the Year of Permission, the fifth (5 AH, AD 626) was Congratulations on Marriage, and the year of his death (11 AH, AD 632) was Farewell.[3] However, in AD 638 (17 AH) the second caliph, Umar (634–44), instituted the Hijri Era with an epoch of 16 July AD 622 (1 Muharram 1 AH). In an

agrarian economy, however, the lunar Hijri Era proved seriously deficient. Taxes needed to be collected soon after the annual harvest, and with a lunar era the date of collection did not fall at the same point in the seasonal cycle. Any date in the Hijri Era year – for example, 1 Muharram (New Year's Day) or 10 Ramadan – would regress at the rate of 11¼ days against the seasons. Thus, Abd al-Malik (685–705), the third Umayyad ruler, decided, for administrative and fiscal reasons, to adopt a new solar era. However, this new era could not be allowed to challenge the primacy of the Hijri. Thus, the Kharaji or Taxation Era, with the 365-day Zoroastrian calendar (12 months of 30 days plus five at the end), had to be designed to track the liturgical era. In the early years of its adoption this meant that the solar era numbering sequence had to be adjusted so that it would overlap the Hijri, 68 KH matching 68 AH, and so on. But, because of the 11-day difference, after 32 years the two eras would diverge. Left uncorrected, this discrepancy would have introduced confusion into official documents and records. It would also have left the peasant at the mercy of unscrupulous tax collectors. After paying taxes for the current solar year, the cultivator could be dunned some months later for another payment – due because the lunar year had changed. To avoid this confusion the Kharaji Era had to be periodically recalibrated, the numbering sequence advanced. This process was called *izdilaq* (sliding) in Arabic and *tahvil* (changing) in Persian. Thus, in every Kharaji Era century the years after the 32nd, the 64th and the 96th were eliminated – 34 KH following 32, 66 following 64 and 98 following 96.[4]

Trying in this way to keep the solar and lunar eras in synchronisation was complicated and unwieldy. Readjusting the Kharaji Era every 32 years was difficult to remember. Accurate records were hard to maintain and discrepancies constantly arose. Thus, from the late Umayyad period onward Islamic states began to adopt a second solar era, completely separate from the Hijri, with a different epoch and year count. The first of these was the Yazdgerd Era, named after the last ruler of the Sassanian Dynasty (224–651), Yazdgerd III (r. 632–51). Although its epoch was 632, the Yazdgerd Era was not widely adopted until several centuries later, well after the problems associated with 'sliding' or 'changing' had become widely apparent.[5]

While a major advance over the Kharaji, the Yazdgerd Era still needed periodic adjustment. The Zoroastrian calendar included only 365 days and thus, like the Hijri, it also regressed against the seasons – although only a quarter of a day per year. The correction applied by Iranian astronomers – intercalating one month every 120 years – was even more difficult to remember, and, as a result, New Year's day (the vernal equinox), when taxes were due, gradually receded, disturbing both taxpayers and tax collectors alike.

The next solar era was the Jalali or Maliki. The work of the astronomers in the new observatory of the Seljuq ruler Jalal al-Daulah Malik Shah (r. 1072–92),

it corrected the error which had crept into the date of Nau Ruz over the 400 years since the creation of the Yazdgerd Era. By the middle of the eleventh century, Nau Ruz had regressed such that it fell in the late winter (26 February) instead of the early spring. Malik Shah's astronomers returned the first day of the year to the Vernal Equinox (21 March) and inserted a leap year in order to keep the new era in synch with the seasons. The epoch of the Jalali Era was 1079.[6]

The third solar era regularly employed in the medieval Islamic world was the Turkish 12-Year Animal Era. Also called the Chinese-Uighur Animal Era, it came to Iran during the reign of the Mongol Il-Khanid dynasty (1256–1335). The year began *c.*27 January, and each year was named after one of the 12 animal signs of the Chinese zodiac. In Iran, however, the era was revised. The calendar became the 365-day Zoroastrian and the year began at Nau Ruz.[7]

As a result of the multiple calendars and eras, by the beginning of the early modern period the Safavid (1501–1722), Mughal (1526–1739) and Ottoman (1299–1922) Empires all confronted similar questions of chronology: How to manage state finances – collect land revenue and pay salaries – without the benefit of a chronological framework that tracked the seasons? And, if a solar era were adopted, how to reconcile the different calendars and eras? How to accurately maintain records and write histories?

Safavid Empire

Of the three empires, the Safavids seem to have solved the chronological problems with the least amount of controversy and contention. The reason was the solar tradition they had inherited. Both the Achaemenid (550–330 BC) and Sasanid (AD 224–651) empires employed the 365-day Zoroastrian calendar. The year began at the Vernal Equinox and had 12 months of 30 days each – the five extra were added at the end. There were no weeks – each of the 30 days had its own individual name. The Zoroastrian era, on the other hand, was confusing. Under both the Achaemenids and Sasanids, a new era began with the inauguration of a new ruler. Irrespective of the actual date of accession, the second year of the reign always began at Nau Ruz. Thus, for pre-Islamic Iranians, Nau Ruz was the pre-eminent celebration – the first day of the year, the beginning of spring and the anniversary of the ruler's accession.

A brief look at four authors from the reign of Shah Abbas I (1587–1629) reveals four solutions to the problem of reconciling the lunar and solar eras. The four are Iskandar Beg Munshi, Mahmud b. Hidayat Allah, Afushtah-i Natanzi, Jalal al-Din Muhammad Yazdi and Mirza Beg b. Hasan Junabadi.

While Iskandar Beg's (*c.*1560–1632) history was not the first, it has become, because of its English translation, the best known. Also, as it happens, Iskandar

Beg was the author who dealt most directly with the problem of chronology. As a secretary (*munshi*), his duties included drafting letters, documents and diplomatic messages, and keeping financial accounts.[8] He wrote: 'I […] conceived a desire to learn bookkeeping […] I lost no opportunity of studying biographical and historical works, because I wanted to achieve success in that noble brand of learning.'[9] Careful with his evidence, he only wrote about the things which he had himself witnessed or about which he had consulted reliable sources.[10]

His *Tarikh-i Alam Ara-i Abbasi* (The World Adorning History of Abbas) was divided into two parts: the first, completed in 1616 and organised topically, gave abbreviated accounts of Muhammad and the Twelve Imams, the origins of the Safavid Sufi order, and the reigns of the first four Safavid rulers; the second, finished in 1629, was a detailed history of Abbas I.[11] In the preface to this second part, Iskander Beg stated that he had decided to organise his material annalistically (that is, year by year or *sal bi sal*). There was, however, a problem:

> If, in the manner of the historians [*ahl-i tarikh*], the Hijri year, whose beginning according to Arab usage is the first of Muharram, should be adopted, then most of the people of Iran would not understand. For among the Turks and Iranians, the beginning of the year is Nau Ruz-i Sultani, which is the first day of the world-adorning spring. When four seasons pass and another Nau Ruz comes, that is one year. The month of Muharram may fall anywhere in the Turki year [*sal-i Turki*]. Dates of great events [of the Hijri year] for which talented people provide a literary arrangement will vary with the Turki year […] Some will correspond to the previous year and some to the subsequent, i.e., one fewer or one more. Since this ignoble atom is under the obligation to eliminate and expunge ambiguities and problems from this work […] [and make] it acceptable to the comprehension of both the ordinary person and specialist alike, he has closed his eyes to that discrepancy […] and has settled on the Turki year which the general public better understands so that knowledge may increase among those who inquire after events.[12]

In the Turkish 12-Year Animal Era employed by Iskandar Beg and the other Safavid historians, the calendar was the revised Zoroastrian – the year began at the Vernal Equinox and every fourth year an extra day was added.

Despite his awareness of the difficulties, Iskandar Munshi was not able in his account to escape chronological confusion completely. In fact, a brief look at several passages shows how difficult clarity could be, even for the most experienced and thoughtful historian.[13] Abbas I came to the throne on 16 October 1587,[14] and the heading of Iskandar Beg's first chapter read: 'The Remaining Events of the Year of the Pig, the Year of Shah Abbas' Accession.'[15] Since the Year of the Pig ran from 21 March 1587 to 20 March 1588, and since the official accession date in Safavid Iran was the first New Year's day after the emperor's

assumption of rule, this heading was accurate. Abbas' first official year lasted only about five months – 16 October 1587 to 20 March 1588. While the Hijri Era year of Abbas' accession went unremarked, Iskandar Beg's heading for the emperor's second year was 'The Year of the Rat, the Second Year of Shah Abbas' Reign'. The first line of this chapter began 'In the Spring of 997 […]' However, 997 was not the accurate Hijri equivalent, and this error highlights the difficulties Safavid historians had in integrating the solar and lunar eras. The Year of the Rat, the second year of Abbas' reign, and the first to encompass a full 365 days, ran from 21 March 1588 to 20 March 1589. Since Hijri 997 ran from 20 November 1588 to 10 November 1589, its spring would have been March–June 1589, not 1588. The Hijri spring at the beginning of Abbas' second year fell in 996 (2 December 1587 to 19 November 1588). Iskandar Beg's confusion probably arose from the Hijri date of the emperor's accession. When Abbas came to the throne (16 October 1587), Hijri 995 had only about six weeks to run; it ended on 1 December 1587. Thus, the bulk of Abbas' first year fell in Hijri 996 (2 December 1587 to 19 November 1588). As a result, it was only natural for the historian to have chosen 997 as the Hijri equivalent for the beginning of Abbas' second year. And, in fact, this confusion has crept into the modern accounts: many authors give 996 instead of 995 as the beginning of Abbas' reign.[16]

For the Safavid historian the problem of chronology arose not only in choosing the proper Turkish and Hijri Era year equivalents, but also in calculating the Hijri date of Nau Ruz. In Safavid Iran the first day of spring was a major occasion. Nevertheless, arriving at the exact Hijri date (day, month, year) for 1 Farvardin (21 March) was not easy. While a skilled astrologer, working from the conversion tables of an up-to-date almanac, could in theory solve the problem, the chronicler might easily fall into error. An inexperienced astrologer, a flawed almanac, an inattentive copier – any of these could throw off the calculation. Given his awareness of the problem, it is ironic that Iskandar Munshi seems to have committed so many chronological errors.[17]

The second historian was Mahmud b. Hidayat Allah, Afushtah-i Natanzi (b. 1531). The oldest one of the four, Natanzi was nearly 68 years old when he wrote *Nuqawat al-Athar fi Dhikr al-Akhyar* (The Choicest of Works in Remembrance of the Righteous) in 1598.[18] Like Iskandar Munshi, Natanzi was not a full-time historian but, since he had access to imperial documents and correspondence, he must have had some position at court.[19] Natanzi's account, however, unlike Iskandar Munshi's, was limited in scope – not only to the Safavid Dynasty but to the reigns of four rulers: Book One covered Tahmasp, Ismail II and Muhammad Khudabanda; while Book Two dealt with the initial 11 years of Abbas I.

Because of the leisurely pace of his narrative (he devoted more than 350 pages to the first 11 years of Abbas' reign), Natanzi seems to have decided to organise

his material thematically rather than chronologically, with a single section sometimes encompassing events of several years. A look at his table of contents reveals the following chapter titles: Victory of Murshid Quli Khan over the Uzbegs, Reconquest of Mashhad, Abbas' Entry into Qazvin and Abbas' Entry into Isfahan. Since in Book Two he was writing at roughly the same time as the events he was describing (that is, he drafted his account of Abbas' first 11 years (1587–98) during the period 1590–8), he perhaps felt less need to include dates. Nevertheless, when he did employ the annal format for chapter headings, he had a different way of integrating the solar and lunar eras. For example, an early chapter was entitled: 'Describing the Events of the Fourth Year After the Accession of Abbas; that is, 14 Jumada I 998–24 Jumada I 999.'[20] While at first glance it appears as if Natanzi had chosen the liturgical era as his default format, a closer look suggests that the underlying historical chronology was in fact solar. Firstly, although the months and years were lunar, the 12 months so delimited encompassed not the 354 days of the Hijri year (14 Jumada I 998–13 Jumada I 999), but rather the 365 days of the Turkish and Jalali era years (the extra ten days of 14 Jumada I–24 Jumada I). Secondly, the year began not on the first day of the liturgical year (1 Muharram) but rather on 1 Farvardin (21 March). Finally, Natanzi also followed the Iranian custom of moving the official accession date to the nearest Nau Ruz. Thus, like Iskandar Munshi, he had Abbas' first year end on 20 March 1588, and, as a result, his fourth year ran from 21 March 1590 to 20 March 1591. While Natanzi was sparing of dates, he must have had access to a skilled astrologer. Not only were his Hijri equivalents for Nau Ruz accurate, but he occasionally provided dates for important events, giving the solar and lunar versions. Thus, Abbas' father, Muhammad Khudabanda, ascended the throne on 12 Shawwal 985 in the Hijri Era and 1 Urdu Bihisht 498 in the Jalali.[21]

The third historian was Jalal al-Din Muhammad Yazdi (d. 1619). Occupying the office of chief imperial astrologer (*munajjim bashi*), he was a great favourite of the young emperor. In 1609, Abbas dispatched Jalal al-Din to the great observatory in Maragha (just south of Tabriz) for study and observation. Built by the first Il-Khanid ruler Hulagu (1256–65) in 1259, Maragha had been the premier observatory in the Islamic world for several centuries. After Jalal al-Din's death in 1619, the emperor appointed his son Mulla Kamal (author of *Tarikh-i Mulla Kamal* (History of Mulla Kamal) and *Zubdat al-Tawarikh* (The Best of the Histories)) to his father's office. Mulla Kamal remained chief astrologer throughout the reign of Shah Safi, Abbas' successor.[22]

Because of his training and experience, Jalal al-Din had the surest command of historical chronology. In early modern Islam the astrologer was the time expert: consulting the annual almanac for the appearance of the moon, the arrival of spring, and the dates of eclipses and planetary conjunctions. He calculated

equivalent dates across eras and calendars, cast horoscopes and was a court recorder, making official copies of important documents and orders. In his *Vaqa-i al-Sinin va al-Avam* (Events of the Years and Eras), Abd al-Husayn Khatunabadi wrote that an important source was the '[…] orders of the astrologers [*dastur-i munajjiman*]'.[23]

Jalal al-Din's history, entitled *Tarikh-i Abbasi* (History of Abbas) or *Ruznama-Mulla Jalal* (Mulla Jalal's Almanac), began, like Abu al-Fazl's *Akbar Nama* (History of the Mughal Ruler Akbar), with an astrological prologue: the auspicious alignment of the stars and planets at the moment of Abbas' birth foretold a historic reign. He also completed a treatise on astrology, *Tuhfat al-Munajjim* (Present for Astrologers), which contained a great deal of material on court life and which was a prime source for Iskandar Beg.[24]

Jalal al-Din's composition, like Natanzi's, covered a relatively short span of Safavid history. It began with the death of Shah Tahmasp and continued until the 25th year of Abbas' reign (1611–12). Because of his profession, Jalal al-Din included more dates – with greater detail and more equivalents – than the other three chroniclers. His history was an annal, with chapter headings like 'A Description of the Year 998'.[25] However, in order to render his narrative intelligible to his Iranian readers, he began the first line of each chapter with a solar equivalent. Thus, 'A Description of the Events of 1000' began: '[…] according to the *Tushqan* [Rabbit] Year he turned on *Sih Shambah* [Tuesday] four Muharram toward Isfahan'.[26] And the first line of the chapter on Hijri 1009 started: 'The first of Muharram of this year was equivalent to the twenty-fourth *Tir* [Fourth Month] of *Sichqal* [Mouse] Year.'[27] In contrast to Iskandar Munshi and Natanzi, however, the significant New Year was not the Jalali 1 Farvardin (21 March), but the liturgical 1 Muharram.

The final historian was Mirza Beg b. Hasan Junabadi. His *Rauzat al-Safawiya* (The Garden of the Safavids) was devoted entirely to the Safavid Dynasty – from its founding in 1501 by Ismail to the death in 1629 of Abbas I. Like the other three men, Junabadi was a contemporary of Abbas, beginning his work in 1617 and finishing sometime in the 1630s. Nothing is known of his occupation, but he was probably a minor court functionary since he seems to have witnessed many of the events he described. Although Junabadi included a Hijri date in the headings of a few early chapters,[28] a typical chapter title was prolix and awkward, without any chronological marker whatsoever. For example, the chapter on Abbas' founding of his new capital, one of the most important passages in the entire work, began: 'A Description of the Creation of the Buildings and Structures of Dar al-Saltanat-i Isfahan and the Rejuvenation of the *Suqs* [covered bazaars] and the Creation of the Naqsh-i Jahan *Maidan* [piazza] and the Great Buildings and Gates and the Laying out of the Avenue and the *Chahar Baghs* [Garden Palaces] of the City of Isfahan.'[29] About halfway through the chapter,

however, a date appeared: 'In 1012 [1603–04] at a well-chosen hour a new *maidan* [piazza] was laid out in the Naqsh-i Jahan area.'[30] Its inclusion signalled the importance of the event. The maidan was the political, economic and religious centre of the Safavid city, and the date of its founding marked the birth of the new capital.[31]

Mughal Empire

Like the Safavids, the Mughals inherited a complex chronological tradition. Unlike the Safavids, however, the Mughals in India had no historic or ethnic tie to the indigenous culture. They had established their empire in an alien land. As a result, the introduction of a new solar calendar and era met with much more opposition from their conservative religious elite.

In the Indian subcontinent both lunar and solar calendars were common. The Indic solar calendar, like the Iranian, contained 365 days, but the lunar, unlike the Hijri, was lunisolar – the year was 354 days, with an extra month of 30 days intercalated every three years or so.[32] While the Indo-Sankritic chronological tradition encompassed a number of eras, in the early modern period three had achieved widespread popularity. The most ancient was the Mahayuga or Great Era. Encompassing a total of 4,320,000 years, it was further subdivided into four shorter *yugas* (eras). The first was the Krita or Golden Yuga (1,728,000 years), the second the Treta or Silver Yuga (1,296,000 years) and the third the Dvapara or Bronze Yuga (864,000 years). The last and current era, the Kali or Black Yuga, had begun at midnight 17/18 February 3102 BC and would continue for 432,000 years. While the Kali Yuga was described in most astronomical treatises and almanacs, it was not generally found in the local histories and records. The Vikramaditya Samvat (Vikramaditya Era), on the other hand, was in everyday use. Said to have been established by King Vikramaditya, the ruler of Ujjain, to commemorate his victory over the Sakas, its epoch was 14 October 58 BC. The Saka Samvat (Saka Era), the third era, had been established by the Indo-Scythians or Sakas, a branch of the larger Indo-European Saka group of tribes. Its epoch was 3 March AD 78, and it was employed in many Indian states.[33]

During the reigns of the first two Mughal emperors, Babur (1526–30) and Humayun (1530–56), historians and record-keepers employed the Hijri Era exclusively. With Akbar (1556–1605), however, the founder of the mature empire, the problems of a lunar era in an agrarian state became impossible to ignore. During the 1570s, in the midst of his reform of the land revenue system, Akbar introduced the first solar taxation era – the Fasli or Harvest Era. Although its epoch was set at his accession (14 February 1556), the numbering of the

Fasli Era (FE), like that of the Kharaji, was adjusted to match the Hijri. Thus the first year of the new era was 963 FE, which equalled 963 AH and AD 1556.[34] The Fasli Era, however, suffered from the same deficiency as the Kharaji – it had to be advanced every 32 years to keep it in harmony with the Hijri. As a result, Akbar's men often used the Turkish 12-Year Animal Era in their financial and administrative documents – the *Sanawat-i Turki* (Turkish Era) or the *Duwzadah Sal-i Turki* (Twelve-Year Turkish Era). Here the Mughals followed the Safavids: their Turkish era began at the Vernal Equinox, had 365¼ days, and featured the Zoroastrian days and months.[35]

But for the Mughals, as for the Safavids, another solar era unconnected to the Hijri was felt to be necessary. The Fasli Era, like the Kharaji, had to be periodically adjusted to keep it in synchronisation with the Hijri, and the Turkish 12-Year Animal Era, since it periodically repeated itself, could only be employed in connection with a more comprehensive system. Thus, in 1584, Akbar introduced the *Tarikh-i Ilahi* or Divine Era.

In Mughal India, however, as in Safavid Iran, the introduction of a new historical era completely separate from the Hijri required an explanation. Iskandar Munshi had justified his use of the Turkish year by referring to the ancient Iranian festival of Nau Ruz. In Mughal India, on the other hand, the historian Abu al-Fazl situated Akbar's decision to adopt a different era in the context of economic justice and administrative efficiency. The emperor had deplored the confusion and deceit associated with 'sliding' or 'changing', and the 'grievous oppression' to which it exposed the peasant.[36] In addition, the present eras all had serious record-keeping and accounting problems. The Hijri, Yazdgerd and Vikramaditya eras, all nearing or exceeding 1,000, had made the tasks of scribes and accountants, in a system where numbers were entered and copied by hand (and sometimes expressed in words rather than figures), increasingly cumbersome: 'the writing and speaking of such eras in conversation and business had become very difficult'[37] and 'a new computation of years and months throughout the fair regions of Hindustan [would allow] perplexity to give place to easiness'.[38]

The Tarikh-i Ilahi, like much else in Mughal culture, was heavily indebted to Safavid Iran. Under the Mughals, the language of court and administration was Persian, and Mughal poetry, prose, painting, music and architecture all bore an Iranian imprint. Because of its size and wealth, India had become a popular place of refuge and employment for Iranian artists, soldiers and administrators. Not only was the Tarikh-i Ilahi solar, but its calendar was Zoroastrian, beginning at Nau Ruz and employing the ancient day and month names. Iranian influence was also evident in the 12-year cycle that Akbar instituted. Each Divine Era year was named after one of the 12 Zoroastrian months – Year One was *Farwardin (Tarikh-i) Ilahi* and so on.

But in India the new solar era soon ran into resistance. While Jahangir (1605–27), Akbar's son and successor, employed the *Tarikh-i Ilahi* in the histories and records of his reign – dividing his memoir (*Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*) according to the new era and beginning each section at Nau Ruz – his son Shahjahan (1628–58) was persuaded by orthodox objections to discontinue the innovation. After Mirza Amin Qazvini, the court chronicler, finished his account of the emperor's first decade (1628–38) using the *Tarikh-i Ilahi*, Shahjahan withheld his approval.[39] A new historian, Abd al-Hamid Lahori, was chosen, and in his history (*Badshah Namah*) the first decade of Shahjahan's rule was revised, replacing Qazvini's Divine Era chronology with the Hijri.[40]

For Aurangzeb (1656–1707), the last and most pious of Akbar's successors, abolishing the solar era was not enough. He banned the celebration of its chief festival also. Nau Ruz, introduced by Akbar, had been commemorated with great éclat by him and his two successors. Even Shahjahan, who had replaced the Tarikh-i Ilahi with the Hijri Era, continued to celebrate the first day of spring. Nevertheless, in 1659, Aurangzeb forbade any official celebration of Nau Ruz. It was associated, he maintained, with the Zoroastrians:

> In any case, as this day [Nau Ruz] is one of the festivals of the fireworshippers [*ayad-i majus*] […] there must be no repetition of this stupid act [that is, celebrating the festival].[41]

The difficulties of returning to the Hijri Era, however, did not go unnoticed. The historian Khafi Khan, writing some 30 years after Aurangzeb's death, observed:

> Mathematicians, astronomers and men who have studied history, know that […] the recurrence of the four seasons, summer, winter, the rainy season of Hindus, the autumn and spring harvests, the ripening of the corn and fruit of each season, the *tankwa* [income] of the *jagirs*, and the money of the *mansabdars*, are all dependent upon the solar reckoning, and cannot be regulated by the lunar.[42]

Ottoman Empire

Like the Mughal and Safavid Empires, the Ottoman Empire also boasted an indigenous solar tradition. Located at the Western edge of Islamic Eurasia, the Ottoman Empire included large areas of Eastern Europe. As a result, for the Ottomans the indigenous solar tradition was Christian – the Julian calendar of 365¼ days, with the familiar day and month names, and the Anno Domini Era, which first appeared in Rome in the sixth century AD, and had, by the turn of the first millennium, spread throughout Western Europe.

However, the Ottoman solution to the problem of a lunar era in an agrarian economy was complicated by a mismatch between income and expenditures. In

the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Janissaries (infantry) of the imperial household were paid four times a year in cash (at the end of each Hijri quarter).[43] Agrarian revenue, on the other hand, could only be collected according to a solar calendar – after the harvests.

To solve this problem the Ottomans introduced a new solar era – the Maaliye or Financial Era. Its calendar, based on the Julian, was first used during the reign of Bayazid I (1481–1512).[44] Like the Abbasids and Mughals, the early Ottomans did not want to employ an era whose year sequence differed from the Hijri. Thus, the Maaliye Era, like the Kharaji and Fasli, had to be periodically adjusted. The process, called *sivis* (skipping) in Turkish, was the same as *izdilaq* (sliding) in Arabic and *tahvil* (changing) in Persian. In contrast, however, the confusion and disruption associated with 'skipping' failed to convince the Ottomans to change their chronology. Unlike the Safavids or Mughals, they chose neither to adopt an older system nor to create a new one.

The Janissary payment schedule and the 11-day difference between the Maaliye and Hijri Era calendars meant that every eight solar years an extra (lunar) quarterly payment came due (8 × 11 = 88 days), and after 32 solar years a full (lunar) year of revenue had to be found (32 × 11 = 354 days). To remedy this difficulty, the Ottomans experimented with several strategies. One alternative, prudent but challenging, was saving. An amount equal to 11 days would be set aside each year. Saving, however, was hard and was successfully implemented only once – in 1653–4.[45] For the rest of the early modern period, the sultan and his officials were forced to resort to other methods to make up the deficit. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the empire was expanding, the Ottomans were often able to fund the salary shortfall from the proceeds of conquests. When these were no longer available, however, other solutions were tried: new taxes, devaluation or borrowing. However, these were profoundly disruptive – so much so that one historian has recently reinterpreted early modern Ottoman history in terms of the *sivis* year deficits. Major political and economic crises occurred every 33 years or so in response to the government's efforts to close the fiscal gap.[46]

The decision to avoid adopting an era completely separate from the Hijri also affected the writing of history. Unlike the Mughal and Safavid chroniclers, Ottoman historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries relied almost exclusively on the Hijri calendar and era to date and organise their narratives. While they were certainly aware of other chronological systems, the Ottomans, for the most part, did not employ the multiple calendars and eras of their Mughal and Safavid counterparts. This difference, while increasing the consistency and clarity of their chronology, led them to organise their histories around different themes.

In all three empires the sixteenth century of the Common Era, the tenth of the Hijri, was a time of millennial expectation and excitement. In all three, self-styled prophets of revolution rose to prominence. Anointing themselves the *mahdi* (awaited one) or the *mujeddid* (renewer) of the new millennium, they preached reform, revival and revolution to a fearful and unsettled populace, attracting large numbers of followers. From the Mahdavis in India and the Nuqtavis in Iran to the Celalis in Anatolia, the century provided fertile soil for the growth of eschatological, millenarian movements. While the Mughal and Safavid historians did not fail to notice these heterodox leaders and their sects, especially as they impinged on the activities of the emperor and his court, in neither case did they choose to situate their accounts in a specifically millennial context. For these authors, the Hijri Era was only one of several chronological frameworks and, as a result, they did not give its millennium a great deal of attention.

For the Ottoman historians, on the other hand, committed to the exclusive use of the Hijri Era, the end of the millennium (1000 AH/AD 1592) could not be ignored. For many of them, in fact, it became a major theme in their accounts of the mid-to-late sixteenth century. For example, several authors depicted Suleiman I (1520–66) as the *mujeddid* of the new dispensation, the political and spiritual leader who would rule until the end of the age.[47] And the historian and bureaucrat Mustafa Ali (1541–1600), a resident of Istanbul, reflected in his works the pervasive mood of anxiety – composing a short piece on the astrological signs of the impending apocalypse[48] while focusing his poetry on the millennial themes of disease, want and revolution.[49]

Finally, writing almost a hundred years after the event, the historian Mustafa Naima (1656–1716) noted the widespread hysteria:

> Writers of defective intelligence […] say […] that when the thousandth year of the Hijrah was once over, the day of the resurrection would immediately arrive […] Witness, for instance, their speculations concerning the completion of the moon's revolutions, whence they affirm, that the Prophet (on whom be blessing and peace) should not remain in his grave till [after] the thousand years expired.[50]

Conclusion

While the sacred system of chronology revealed to the prophet Muhammad served to distinguish the new religious community from its Christian and Jewish neighbours, it nevertheless created a serious problem for the administrators, record-keepers and historians of the early modern Islamic empires. Two sets of problems proved particularly difficult: first, the fiscal and administrative and second, the historical. Each of the three empires – coming from a different ethnic

background and cultural tradition – faced a different version of the chronological conflict, and each fashioned a different solution.

The Safavid solutions to the two problems reflected both the size and complexity of their state on the one hand, and its ancestry and traditions on the other. Because the Safavid Empire was neither as populous nor as centralised as the Mughal or Ottoman Empires, the fiscal administrative difficulty was less serious. The Safavid economy was less monetised, and the bulk of agrarian revenue remained in the countryside to support the troops of the Qizilbash chieftains. Moreover, the traditional due date for agrarian taxes had always been Nau Ruz, the beginning of the Zoroastrian year. In addition, while the *ghulams* (slave soldiers) of Shah Abbas' household were paid from his private revenues – customs duties, silk exports, urban imports and agrarian taxes – their numbers never increased beyond his ability to support them. Thus the Safavids, unlike the Mughals or the Ottomans, never considered Islamic chronology a serious fiscal problem.

For the two populous empires, on the other hand – the Mughals were *c.*125 million, the Ottomans *c.*40 million and the Safavids only *c.*6–10 million – the development of a separate solar calendar and era was more crucial. Both had much larger economies – with substantial commercial and monetised agrarian sectors – and their military and administrative systems were larger and more complex.

The Mughals in India presided over the richest and most productive agrarian economy of the three – two great river systems, an annual monsoon and two harvests a year. As a result, they soon developed a complicated and detailed solar chronology for the levying and collection of taxes. A typical revenue document included the Hijri and Ilahi day, month and year, the Turkish Animal year, and the season – fall (*kharif*) or spring (*rabi*).

For the Ottomans, on the other hand, developing a fiscal chronology was much more difficult. Although the Ottomans, like the Mughals, ruled a large and rich agrarian empire, their self-image was largely Islamic. They legitimised themselves in Islamic terms – the sultan was caliph (head of the worldwide Sunni community) and protector of the holy cities (Mecca and Medina). They were never able, at least during the early modern period, to embrace the Christian calendar and era fully. The result, as we have seen, was political and economic disorder as they struggled to organise their fiscal system in the absence of an independent solar chronology.

The other chronological issue for the three early modern Islamic empires was the historical. With two, three or more calendars and eras, how were historians to date and organise their narratives? For the Mughals, the introduction of a separate solar calendar and era, while perfectly acceptable for accounting and administrative purposes, proved controversial in court compositions

– chronicles, memoirs and reports. The public adoption of a non-Islamic chronology and the celebration of alien festivals further disturbed the pious Sunnis of the newly reorganised state. Already threatened by the *sulh-i kull* (universal reconciliation) policy of Akbar – a strategy that opened state administration and court culture to Hindus and Shi'ite Muslims alike – this conservative faction mounted a campaign of protest. While Shahjahan and Aurangzeb discontinued the use of the *Tarikh-i Ilahi* in official histories and documents, solar chronologies continued to be employed in fiscal offices and documents.

For the Ottomans, on the other hand, the lack of a separate solar chronology proved much less disruptive for public writing. The Ottomans relied exclusively on the Hijri calendar and era in their chronicles, reports and documents. As a result, they faced neither the problems of the Safavids – translating dates from one era to another – nor of the Mughals – fending off the protests of outraged traditionalists. Rather, their chronological orthodoxy led them to take up an apocalyptic millennial theme missing in the other two historiographies.

The Zoroastrian heritage of the Safavids offered each of the four historians a different approach to the problem of reconciling lunar and solar chronologies. Iskandar Munshi, although cognisant of the importance of Nau Ruz in Iranian culture, still had difficulty integrating the Turkish Animal and Hijri dating systems. He made errors in determining the Hijri and Animal Era equivalents and in calculating the Hijri date of Nau Ruz. Mahmud b. Hidayat Allah Natanzi stuck with the Hijri Era month names and year numbers, but expanded the lunar era categories so as to encompass the seasons. His years were the 365-day solar variety rather than the 354-day lunar, and New Year's day was 1 Farvardin rather than 1 Muharram. Jalal al-Din Muhammad Yazdi, the emperor's chief astrologer and the most sophisticated chronologer of the four, stuck with the Hijri calendar and era in his chapter and narrative headings, and his year began on 1 Muharram. His use of solar era dates was sparing but when he did include them – Turkish Animal Era year or Hijri date of Nau Ruz – he was accurate. Finally, Mirza Beg b. Hasan Junabadi, aware of the chronological problems and uncertain of his ability to produce accurate equivalents, chose to severely reduce his use of dates. His history, restricted to Abbas' reign, featured headings that were prolix, substituting narrative detail for chronological specificity. When a date was included, however, it was simple – the liturgical year only.

Negotiating the maze posed by the strictly lunar chronology of the prophet proved somewhat easier for the Safavids than it did for the Mughals and Ottomans. The ancient solar tradition, inherited from the venerable Achaemenid and Sassanid Empires, created a rich chronological storehouse for Safavid administrators and historians. Unlike the Mughals or Ottomans, the Safavids experienced neither the criticism of an outraged conservative elite nor the political and economic disruption of a confusing accounting system.

Notes

1. Quran 9: 36–7.
2. E. G. Richards, *Mapping Time: The Calendar and Its History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), 231; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, s.v. 'Tarikh'.
3. Richards, *Mapping Time*, 234.
4. The first documented example was in 242 AH/AD 856–7 during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (232–47 AH/AD 846–62). S. H. Taqizadeh, 'Various eras and calendars used in the countries of Islam', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 9 (1939), 903–16.
5. Frank Parise, *The Book of Calendars* (New York: Facts on File, 1982), 96; Taqizadeh, 'Various eras and calendars', 918–22.
6. S. H. Taqizadeh, 'Various eras and calendars used in the countries of Islam', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 10 (1939), 108–17.
7. Charles Melville, 'The Chinese Uighur animal calendar in Persian historiography of the Mongol period', *Iran*, 32 (1994), 83–98; Gerhard Doerfer, 'The influence of Persian language and literature among the Turks', in Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh (eds), *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 237–49.
8. Sholeh Quinn, *Historical Writing During the Reign of Shah Abbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (Utah: University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2000), 22.
9. Ibid., 58.
10. Ibid., 59.
11. Ibid., 23.
12. Iskandar Munshi, *Tarikh-e Alamara-ye Abbasi: History of Shah Abbas the Great by Eskandar Beg Munshi*, tr. Roger M. Savory, 2 vols (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), 2: 547–8.
13. For discussion, see R. D. McChesney, 'A note on Iskandar Beg's chronology', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 39 (1980), 53–63.
14. H. Roemer, 'The Safavid Period', in Jackson, Peter and Laurence Lockhart (eds), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), 261.
15. Munshi, *Tarikh-e Alamara*, 2: 551.
16. While H. R. Roemer in the authoritative account got it right (*Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6: 261, 350), several other authors have been confused. I. M. Lapidus, *History of Islamic Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 280 has 1588–1629 as does Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 3.
17. McChesney, 'A note on Iskandar Beg's chronology', 53–63.
18. Muhmud b. Hedayat Allah, Aftushta Natanzi, *Nuqavat al-Asar*, Insan Ishraqi (ed.) (Tehran: BYNK Press, 1350/1971); Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 20.
19. R. D. McChesney, 'Four sources on Shah Abbas' building of Isfahan', *Muqaranas*, 5 (1991), 104–5; Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 20, 54–7.
20. McChesney, 'Four sources', 107.
21. Natanzi, *Nuqavat*, 64.
22. Ali Asghar Mossadegh, '*La Famille Monajjem Yazdi*', *Studia Iranica*, 16 (1987), 125–9.

23. Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 110.
24. Ibid.
25. Jalal al-Din Muhammad Munajjim Yazdi, *Tarikh-i Abbasi*, S. Vahidniya (ed.) (Tehran: NP, 1366 /1987), 71.
26. Ibid., 113.
27. Ibid., 200.
28. Mirza Beg b. Hasan Junabadi, 'Rauzat al-Safaviya', Persian Manuscript Collection, Or. 3388, British Library, 268a, 290a.
29. Ibid., 313b.
30. Ibid., 314b.
31. For a discussion, see Stephen P. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1999), ch. 6.
32. Dewan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai, *Indian Chronology* (Madras: Grant and Co., 1911), 10, 15.
33. For a general discussion, see Singh Gahlot, *Indian Calendars* (Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India: Ratasthan Sahitya Mandir, 1980); Alexander Cunningham, *Book of Indian Eras*, reprint edn (Varanasi, India: Indological Book House, 1970); and Pillai, *Indian Chronology*.
34. See G. H. Kare, 'The Turkish duodenary cycle and its use by the Mughals in India', *Islamic Culture*, 26 (1952), 64–74; *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, s.v. 'Fasli Era'; Gahlot, *Indian Calendars*, xv–xvi; Cunningham, *Book of Indian Eras*, 82; Pillai, *Indian Chronology*, 44–5.
35. Kare, 'The Turkish duodenary cycle', 64–74.
36. Abu al-Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, tr. H. Blochmann and H. S. Jarrett, 3 vols (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873–96), 2: 29.
37. *The Akbar Nama of Abu'l-Fazl: History of the Reign of Akbar including an Account of his Predecessors*, tr. Henry Beveridge, three vols (Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1902–39), 2: 21.
38. Abu al-Fazl, *Ain*, 2: 29.
39. W. E. Begley and Z. A. Desai, *Taj Mahal: The Illumined Tomb – An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Mughal and European Sources* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1989), xxiii–xxv.
40. Ibid., 21.
41. Riazul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations* (1500–1700), 2 vols (Karachi, Pakistan: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1979), 1: 460.
42. Khafi Khan, 'Muntakhab al-Lubab', in H. M. Elliot and John Dowson (eds), *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period*, 8 vols (London: Trubnor Company, 1867–77), 7: 241–2.
43. H. Sahillioglu, 'Sivis year crises in the Ottoman Empire', in M. A. Cook (ed.), *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1970), 232.
44. Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560–1660* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 135.
45. Sahillioglu, 'Sivis year crises', 236.
46. For details of these strategies, see Sahillioglu, 'Sivis year crises'.

47. Cornell Fleischer, 'Seer to the Sultan: Haydar-I Remmal and Sultan Sueyman', in Jayne L. Warner (ed.), *Cultural Horizons: A Festschrift in Honor of Talat S.Halman* (New York: Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 2001), 291–2.
48. Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 126–7.
49. Ibid., 134.
50. Mustafa Naima, *Annals of the Turkish Empire from 1591 to 1659*, tr. Charles Fraser (Arno Press, New York, 1973), x.

5

Historiography in late antique Iran

Touraj Daryaee

In his lectures at the University of California, Berkeley in 1961, the great ancient historian Arnoldo Momigliano made some important observations on Persian mood and method of historical thinking and historiography. According to him, at least with the Achaemenid Persians, there seems to have been specific views on present history as evidenced by Darius the Great's autobiographical narrative of the Behistun Inscription.[1] But the Achaemenid Persians also possessed a profane history of their immediate past, largely indebted to the Jewish and Mesopotamian tradition. The Persian Royal Chronicle(s) were in existence and the king of kings did go to them to learn about the past and make judgments based on them for his own time. This we can gather from the biblical sources in regard to Achaemenid historiography in the sixth and fifth centuries BC.[2]

A millennium later, in the sixth century AD when the Sasanian Persian king, Khusro Anushīrvan, set about putting together a history of the past, things had changed drastically. Alexander the Great had brought the destruction of the Achaemenid Persian Empire and with it the loss of memory of what happened before Alexander.[3] Furthermore, the new Persian historical narrative, the *Khodāy-nāmag* (Book of Lords, or Book of Kings), not only dealt with the immediate past, but also constructed a history from the beginning of the world, from the cosmic creation, to the assault of the Evil Spirit which set the universe in motion, to the measured and pre-set battle between Ohrmazd and Ahriman. The *Khodāy-nāmag* also narrated the existence of a group of mythological kings from the Zoroastrian religious tradition – that is, from the *Avesta* – and a few intermediary kings and epic heroes of the Arsacid age.[4]

Indeed, a new history of Iranians was constructed which was to remain the basis of the Persian view of things until the nineteenth century – that is, for almost another millennia. The Persian sacred history of its land, *Ērānšahr* (Domain of the Iranians), only then collided with the profane historical inquiry of the European world, whose beginning was more like the Achaemenid Persian historical tradition, based on scientific and philological inquiry into the nebulous past of humankind.[5]

This chapter will underline aspects of Sasanian and late antique historiography of Iran, explaining the method and mindset in the creation of a sacred narrative which became the foundations of classical Iranian historiography that continued until the nineteenth century. In the outset it should be noted that there exists a great problem for undertaking such a study. This is because much if not all of our sources for Sasanian historiography are either from outside the Sasanian Empire, or from the post-Sasanian period. The Armenian and Georgian sources do mention the existence of a Persian book of Kings, at least from the late Sasanian period. The history attributed to Sebēos mentions a book about the 'tale of the Iranians/Persian'.[6] Also, according to Leonti Mroveli, in the *History of the Kings of K'art'li*, which is dated in the eighth century AD, we have the Armenian and Georgian version of the text, which mentions the story of Fraydun and Biwrasp, as is called in the books of the Persians or the 'Books of the History of the Persians'.[7]

This is in all probability a reference to the *Khodāy-nāmag*, which was put together during the reign of Khusro Anushrivan. Although the Pahlavi version was lost, it may have been the basis for the translation into Arabic in the eighth century AD of the *Siyar al-Moluk* (Chronicle of Kings) by Ibn Moqaffa' and served as the main source for Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.[8] Thus far, we are encountering evidence about the existence of a Book of Lords or Book of Kings during the Sasanian period; however, they are not in Pahlavi, but referenced by Armenian and Georgian sources. We also possess the Arabic and Persian versions of the text as well, which are well known and studied.

Temporal events in the Sasanian period and its effect on Sasanian historiography

By the fourth century AD, during the rule of Šābuhr II (AD 309–79), Zoroastrianism was able to gain substantial power, because of the architect of Zoroastrian tradition in the Sasanian period, Adurbad ī Mahrspandān.[9] There are sufficient Pahlavi texts relating to his activities, as well as his didactic teachings, to see the influence of this all-important priest. It is at this time the title of *Mowbedān Mowbed* (Chief Priest) was first mentioned and attributed to Adurbad ī Mahrspandān.[10] The reason for his importance may be due to the religious conflicts between Iran and Rome in the fourth century AD. In reaction to Christianity's proselytising, Šābuhr II, with the help of Adurbad ī Mahrspandān, attempted to solidify their defence against this seeming spiritual offensive.[11] We can see this counter by the Sasanians in the guise of persecution of Christians and the various metrologies from this period.[12]

On the other hand, a strong Zoroastrian defence was needed to fend off the adversary religion. In a sense the idea of a 'Zoroastrian Orthodoxy' is attributed to the fourth century AD, where one set of Zoroastrian dictums was accepted by

the Sasanians. Also at this time religious officials start to become influential in administration, law and government. Thus, when it came to the composition of the 'royal history' or the *Khodāy-nāmag* some two centuries after Adurbād ī Mahrspandān, namely in the sixth century AD, the Zoroastrian priests had already taken a great hand in its composition and the activities of the empire.[13] The account of the past certainly had to be acceptable to the Zoroastrian view of history by the sixth century AD. By this time Zoroastrianism provided the basic moral and intellectual foundation for the idea of a written royal history, so the records of dynasties and events were shaped by Zoroastrian ideals regardless of historical fact.

Based on a chapter of the Zoroastrian Middle Persian text, the *Budahišn* (Book of Primal Creation),[14] an encapsulated history in Middle Persian, we can make the following suppositions:

1) Sasanian history described the beginning of the world according to the Avestan notion of the beginning and the mythical dynasties as enumerated in Yašts 5 and 14.[15]
2) Sacred history then crash-lands into the historical era with Darius III. This is followed by a brief account of rulers that were important for Zoroastrian historiography including Alexander, and the Arsacid king, Walāxš.
3) The Sasanians are then treated in much more detail than any other dynasty, except the Kayānians. The reason for this is that the Sasanians are the heir to the Kayānian dynasty of the Avestan Yašts,[16] who first bore the *xvarənah* ('Divine Fortune' or 'Divine Glory'), the symbol of authority in the Iranian world.[17]

The brevity of the interlude, and the omission of the Achaemenids and later the Arsacids, may be that the Sasanian 'sacred history' is not concerned with detailed historical events, but events and personages who are relevant to the Zoroastrian religious tradition. Thus Darius III's defeat at the hands of Alexander and the gathering of the *Avesta* under Walāxš are the important events in the scheme of Zoroastrian sacred history; thus these men among the many were remembered and kept for posterity.[18] Secondly, the Sasanians appear to have wanted to make the point that they were connected to the Kayānians as a mode of establishing their legitimacy in the eyes of the population. It may be for this reason that in Sasanian sacred history, the two dynasties figure so prominently and are so connected to one another. By the beginning of the fifth century AD, some of the Sasanian princes and kings begin to take on Kayānī names, such as Kawād, Khosro and Kāwūs, or titles, such as Rāmšahr (that of Kay Wištāsp). In fact, one can contend that the Sasanian kings began to play the role of the Kayanid kings in history and epic, meaning the imposition of sacred Avestan tradition on to the epic and sacred history of Ērānšahr.[19]

While Zoroastrian sacred history has a beginning, it also has to end. This end is brought about by an apocalyptic age which will usher in all sorts of trouble. What the apocalyptic texts predict of course is simply an internalisation and the framing of historical events, written by the author(s), followed by an end-of-time scenario. Then the saviour appears from a cave or a well and evil withers away; the world becomes flat as it was in the beginning and the eternal paradise is established.[20]

The nature of Sasanian sacred historiography

In late antique Iran the nature of historiography and historical thinking was in many ways different from that of the Greek or Roman or Islamic historiography.[21] This is because the king and the court wished to hold a monopoly on the record of the past, to legitimise their rule. This hold is rarely encountered in the other mentioned traditions. It is not that these did not have imperial histories, but their histories were written by individuals not under the direct rule of the king or caliph. Armenian historiography is a notable example, where noble families such as the Mamikonean and others commissioned historians to write histories of Armenia and themselves in late antiquity.

Sasanian historiography used the Zoroastrian sacred texts/hymns, the *Avesta*, especially the Yašts, as much as the Armenians used the Bible and the Muslims the Quran as a starting point and model in which history revealed itself. In Armenian historiography, events unfolded according to the Christian world view. The development of the written record for Armenia was the work of religious authority and clearly the early works were concerned with religious matters. These ecclesiastical histories were not unique to Armenia, but were the general trend in late antiquity, which is similar in this respect to Iranian historiography.

In Iran, the Zoroastrians wrote their history in a Zoroastrian context, just as the Armenians and Muslims wrote theirs in Christian and Muslim context, respectively; the underlying commonality being their religious view of past, present and future events. Moses Khorenats'i's history shows the accommodation of Armenia's ancient history and pagan past with what Robert Thomson calls a 'Christian orientation'.[22] The purpose of the Armenian historians was to present what had happened according to what the church could accept, assimilate Armenian history with Christian ideas and eliminate parts that were unsuitable to Armenian tastes in late antiquity.[23] The same can be argued for Iranian historiography.[24] What seemed pagan and contrary to the taste of the *mowbeds* (chief priest) in late antique Iran was omitted, and what was in accord with Zoroastrianism was kept in the *Khodāy-nāmag*. Thus, Sasanian history was given a 'Zoroastrian orientation' and started as described in the *Avesta*. In this scheme, Avestan dynasties such as the Kayanians and the Pishdadadians replaced the Achaemenids and the Arsacids in

the *Khodāy-nāmag*; thus the traditional dynasties in the *Avesta* became the traditional kings of Iran.[25]

In the Middle Persian epic, the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* (The Vitae of Ardašīr, the Son of Pābag),[26] Ardašīr, the founder of the Sasanian dynasty (AD 224–40), not only is connected with the Kayānian kings of the Avestan Yašts, but also is said to be from the family (*tōhmag*) of King Dārā (Darius). In the *Kārnāmag*, it seems that Ardašīr was attempting to unify Iran as it had been under the Achaemenids. This may at first glance confirm the Roman historian Herodian's view that Ardašīr knew of his ancestor and claimed those territories by an assertion of ancestral rights. On the other hand it may signal an altered sacred history of Iran, where Freydūn, who ruled over the world and who had divided his realm among his three sons (Iraj, Tuj and Salm) over Iran, Tūrān and Rome, was the point of reference. In Sasanian millennial and apocalyptic historiography, the rule of Ardašīr and his descendants signalled the attempt at the unification of this primal division many eons ago. This would be a sacred view of history as opposed to a profane memory of the past which the Greeks and the Romans held.

It is evident from the external sources we possess that the Sasanian kings mentioned their ancestors and used their memory as a tool for propaganda. By the late Sasanian period, however, the Sasanians were kings of Ērānšahr and did not identify with the Achaemenid kings who were the rulers of a forgotten empire. The Sasanians became the descendants of Fraydūn and the Kayanians, who strived to bring peace to the world as it had been in the beginning of time. In many ways the *Šāhnāmēh of Ferdowsī* is the history of late antique Iran, stripped of much of its Zoroastrian outlook. While this narrative may seem 'untrue' today, it was the history that was constructed and disseminated in Ērānšahr. The Sasanians and later many other dynasties on the Iranian plateau used this narrative to justify their existence and identify their adversaries. We may conclude with a passage from the Middle Persian text, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* (Spirit of Wisdom), where the view of who the ancestors of the Sasanian are and how they view the history of the ancient past in late antiquity. In this important passage the reason for the warfare between the Sasanians, Romans and others is given through the sacred narrative of Iranian historiography (Chapter 20):

> In the pure Religion it is clearly manifest that the central [reason] for the animosity of the Romans and the Turks toward Iranians is because of the revenge which they implanted with the killing of Iraj, and till the restoration at the end of time it will continue.[27]

This tradition lived on in Persian historiographical narrative and was also adopted by some of the later Turkic dynasties, taking on both Iranian and Tūrānian lineage. In some ways this Iranian sacred narrative, without its basis being known, has

become part of the Turkic ultra-nationalist agenda as well. But in late antiquity, Rome, Iran and Tūrān were based on the *Avesta*, which had become historicised and politicised. Even in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, many still hold to this late antique historiography which has the Persian epics as its source.

Specimen of late antique historiography

In order to understand the development of historiography in late antique Iran, one must view the existing passages and chapters on history in the Middle Persian texts. What the *Bundahišn* (Book of Primal Creation) and other Middle Persian texts describe as history is nothing else than the exposition of a sacred Zoroastrian history composed in the Sasanian period. Its first part resembles that of the Avestan Zamyād Yašt tradition, followed by the Sasanian view of the intermediate period between themselves and the Kayānids. Historians have given little value to these texts, because unlike the Arabic and later Persian histories, the sequence of events in the Middle Persian texts are thought to be disordered, unclear, vague and in many instances needing elucidation. The 33rd chapter (according to Anklesaria, 18th according to Bahār) of the *Bundahišn* is surprisingly clear and presents the final and the encapsulated version of Sasanian sacred historiography. This enumeration of sacred history is paralleled with that of the *Šāhnāme of Ferdowsī*, which in turn could show us the content of the lost Sasanian *Khodāy-nāmag* (Book of Lords/Book of Kings). By reviewing the content of this chapter, one is struck by the similarity between it and that of the *Šāhnāme*, which can only mean that they are drawn from a parallel or the same source.

The greater or Iranian *Bundahišn* is contained in three manuscripts: those of TD1,[28] TD2[29] and DH.[30] TD1 and DH appear to be the oldest manuscripts and belong to the sixteenth century, while TD2 was last copied in the early seventeenth century. The chapter is contained in the parts of the following manuscripts: DH 90.16–97.2; TD1 181.2–189.11; TD2 211.3–220.15. I have provided my translation based on the three manuscripts, which I hope is of use for those interested in Persian historiography:

On the disasters which came to Ērānšahr in each millennium

1) When the Evil Spirit rushed forth, in the beginning of the millennium of the mixed state, there was the bull and Gayōmard. When Mašyā and Mašyāne became ungrateful, for 50 years from them there was no birth. In that same millennium for 70 years Hōšang and Tahmuras both killed the demons. At the end of the millennium, the demons cut Jamšēd.
2) In the beginning of the second millennium, Až-ī Dahāg held evil-rule for a thousand years, when the millennium ended Frēdōn captured and bound [him].

3) In the beginning of the third millennium, when Frēdōn distributed the lands, Salm and Tuj, then they killed Iraj, and his children and offspring were scattered.
4) In the same millennium, Manūčīhr was born and sought the revenge of Iraj.
5) Then Frasīyāk came, Manūčīhr along with Iranians were driven out to Padišxwargar, and destroyed them by trouble and misery and much death, and Fraš and Nodar, the sons of Manūčīhr were killed, till other [of their] offsprings took Ērānšahr from Frasīyāk.
6) When Manūčīhr was dead, again Frasīyāk came, he held Ērānšahr till much destruction, and non-Ērānians came to it, [and] he withheld rain from Ērānšahr, till Uzāw the son of Tahmāsb came and repelled Frasīyāk and brought rain which they call 'the New Rain'.
7) And after Uzāw, again Frasīyāk brought serious harm to Ērānšahr, till Kawād came to rulership.
8) During the rulership of Kāwūs, in the same millennium the demons became strong, [and] death came to Ōšnar and his [Kāwūs'] thought was led astray, so he went to battle the sky and fell downwards, his glory departed from him, then by horse and men they [demons] destroyed the material world, through deception [they] bound him [Kāwūs] along with the notables of Kayānids at the summit of Hamāwarān.
9) One who is called Zēngāw, who has poison in his eyes, came to rulership of Ērānšahr from the Tāzīgs [Arabs]. Whoever he saw through his evil-eye he killed. The Iranians by desire sought Frasīyāk to return. He killed Zēngāw and became the ruler of Ērānšahr and took many people from Ērānšahr to settle in Turkestān and ruined and destroyed Ērānšahr, till Rustam prepared from Sīstān and took Samwarān [Hamāwarān], and freed Kay Kāwūs and other Iranians from captivity. He fought with Frasīyāk by the Xorīg Rudbār which is called Spehān [Isfahān]. He made a winning battle, from there [he] inflicted defeat and a second time did much battle with [Frasīyāk], till he defeated and threw him to Turkestān and made Ērānšahr prosper anew.
10) Again Frasīyāk endeavoured and Kay Siyāwaxš came to battle him, to take Sūdābeh. Because of Sūdābeh who was the wife of Kāwūs, Siyāwaxš was with Sūdābeh, Siyāwaxš again did not return to Ērānšahr. For this reason, Frasīyāk in this manner accepted [gave] protection, he [Siyāwaxš] did not go to Kāwūs, by himself he went to Turkestān [and] took the daughter of Frasīyāk as wife. Kay Khusro was born from him, Siyāwaxš was killed there.
11) In the same millennium, Kay Khusro killed Frasīyāk, he himself went to Kangdiz and gave the rulership to Luhrāsp, when Wištāsp had ruled for 30 years the millennium ended. See Shayegan, M. R. (2001).
12) Then the fourth millennium began, in that millennium Zoroaster received [and] brought the religion, Wištāsp accepted [the religion] and made it current. [He] battled hard with Arzāsp, many Iranians and non-Iranians then perished.
13) In the same millennium, when rulership came to Wahman, the son of Spandiyādān, and there was ruin, Iranians perished [killed] one another and there was no one from the seed of the rulers left who would rule. Then they brought Humāy, the daughter of Wahman, to rulership.

14) Then during the rulership of Dārāy, the son of Dārāy, Alexander the Caesar of Rome rushed to Ērān, [he] killed King Dārā and destroyed all the family of the rulers [and] Magus who were visible in Ērānšahr, and extinguished countless fires, and took the religion of the Mazdā worshipping religion and the commentary [of the *Avesta*] and sent it to Rome and burnt the *Avesta* and divided Ērānšahr into 90 king[dom]s.
15) Then during that millennium, Ardašīr, the son of Pāpag became visible and killed those divided rulers, established the kingship and made the religion of the Mazdā worshipping religion current and restored much of the customs which went through his family.
16) During the rulership of Šābuhr, the son of Hormizd the Arabs came, they took Khorīg Rūdbār, for many years with contempt [they] rushed till Šābuhr came to rulership, he destroyed the Arabs and took the land, and destroyed many Arab rulers and pulled out many number of shoulders.
17) During the rulership of Pērōz, the son of Yazdgerd, for six years there was no rain; serious harm and severity came to people.
18) Again Khwašnawāz of the Hephethlite kings came and killed Pērōz and Kawād [and his] sister [and] Ardašīr were taken as hostage to the Hephethlites.
19) During the rulership of Kawād, Mazdak, son of Bāmdād, became visible and established the law of Mazdak and deceived [and] deluded Kawād, and ordered to hold women and offspring and property in association and co-possession, and made the religion of the Mazdā worshipping religion ineffective, till the Immortal Soul, Khosro, the son of Kawād, became powerful, [he] killed Mazdak and put to order the religion of the Mazdā worshipping religion, and defeated those Hayūns who by horses raided Ērānšahr and closed their path and made Ērānšahr without fear. See Shayegan, M. R. (2001) and Wiesehofer, J. (2010).
20) And when the rulership came to Yazdgerd [III], he ruled for 20 years, then the Arabs rushed with many numbers to Ērānšahr, Yazdgerd [III] was not able to battle them, [he] went to Xwarāsān and Turkestān, and asked for horses and men for assistance, he was killed there.
21) The son of Yazdgerd [III] went to India and brought army [and] troop, and before arriving, he was killed in Khurāsān and that army and troop were destroyed. Iran was left to the Arabs and they have made that law of evil religion current, much customs of the ancients they [have] destroyed and the religion of the Mazdā worshipping religion was made feeble and they established the washing of the dead, burying the dead and eating the dead.
22) And from the primal creation of the material world till today, a heavier harm has not come; because of their evil behaviour, misery and ruin and doing violence and evil law, evil religion, danger and misery and other harm have become accepted.
23) In the religion it is said that their evil rule will come to an end.
24) A group will come, with red signs [and] red banners, and will capture from Persia [and] the districts of Iran to Babylon. They will weaken the Arabs.
25) And then someone will come from the direction of Khurāsān, an evil man, he will destroy the people of Padišxwārgar and will misrule for several years, under his leadership in Persia people will be destroyed, with the exception of few on the coast of Kāzerūn, till he would not remain.

26) From then on Hayūns [and] Turks in many numbers and many banners will rush to Ērān, they will ruin this prosperous sweet-smelling Ērānšahr and destroy the family of the nobility. They will do much harm and violence to the people of Ērānšahr, many houses will be uprooted and destroyed and seized, till the gods have mercy.
27) And when the Romans arrive and organise to rule for a year, at that time from the district of Kāwūlistān someone will come whose glory is from the family of the lords, they call him Kay Wahrām. All the people again will be with him and will also rule all the districts of India, Rome and Turkestān. He will prevent all the sinful arrangements, will arrange the religion of Zoroaster, no one will be able to bring to public any other belief.
28) And in the same province, Pašotan, the son of Wištāsp, will come from Kangdiz with 150 righteous men, he will raze that idol-temple(s) which is their secret place and will establish the fire of Wahrām in its place and will always speak [and] arrange the right religion.
29) And then when the fifth millennium of Ušēdar begins, Ušēdar, the son of Zoroaster, will appear according to the religion and the true messenger will come from Ohrmazd, like Zoroaster had brought, he will also bring the religion and propagate it. Distress and drought will lessen, generosity and peace and un-revengefulness will increase in all the material world, for three years he will make the plants green and the Wātaeni river will rush to the height of a horse and the springs and the sea of Kayānsē will again rush and for ten days and nights the sun will remain at the summit of the sky and the species of the wolf, all will be destroyed.
30) Then when the millennium of Ušēdar comes to an end, Malkūs the trouble natured, from the seed of Tūr Bratrēš who was the [cause of the] death of Zoroaster, will become manifest. By religious sorcery and witchful desire, he will make a terrible rain which they call Malkūsān, for three years in winter that is cold, and in the summer that is hot, there will be much snow and hail which destroys the creatures, so that all the people with the exception of few [with] fire will be destroyed and then again the arrangement of the people and cattle will be from the 'Jamshid-created enclosure' and for this purpose it is covered.
31) This too, that in that time knowledge of healing in 1,000 sorts of plants were created in opposition to 1,000 sorts of illness, will come to two sorts of plants, one sort will come to earth, no one will die by illness, with the exception of old age or murder.
32) Then, the sixth millennium of Ušēdarmāh will begin, which is called the millennium of Ušēdarmāh, the son of Zoroaster, by being the prophet he will come from Ohrmazd, like Zoroaster brought the religion, he will too bring the religion [and] make it current in the material world. For 20 days and nights the sun will stand at the summit of the sky, six years he provides greenness to the plants, will destroy that Āz and the seed of Drūz, where the snake with noxious creatures will be destroyed.
33) Then near the end of his millennium of Ušēdar[māh?], Dahāg will be released from bond, that Bēwarāsb through evil desire will destroy many creatures and

creation. In that time, Sōšyans, the son of Zoroaster will become manifest, for 30 days and nights the sun will remain at the summit of the sky.

34) First from the world of the dead, Garšāsb, the son of Sām will rise up, will strike Bēwarāsp with mace and kill him [and] keep him from the creatures. The millennium of Sōšyans will begin like the millennium of that Tan Kirdār which was 57 years.

35) They say, these three sons of Zoroaster, Ušēdar and Ušēdarhmāh and Sōšyans, before Zoroaster mated, they brought the glory of Zoroaster to the sea of Kayānsē for preservation [and] entrusted it to *Ābān Xwarrah* [Glory of Waters] which is the Goddess Ānāhīd.

36) Now also they say that three lights at the base of the sea glow(s), at night it is always seen, one by one when their own time comes.

37) In this manner it will be that a maiden will go the water of Kayānsē to wash her head, that *Xwarrah* [glory] will mix in her body, she will become pregnant, they one by one in the same manner, in their own time thus will be born.

Notes

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2. Ibid., 6.
3. T. Daryaee, '*Imitatio Alexandri* and its impact on late Arsacid, early Sasanian and middle Persian literature', *Electrum*, 12 (2007), 89–97.
4. On the composition of the *Khodāy-nāmag*, see E. Yarshater, 'Iranian national history', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 3(1), 359–477; A. S. Shahbazi, 'On the *Xwaday-namag*', Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater, *Acta Iranica*, 30, Leiden (1990), 208–29.
5. For the history of Persians and their interest in ancient Iran, see I. Afshar, '*Haft-khān rasidan fe Iran-e bāstān*', in *Bukhara*, 11(70) (2009), 299–310.
6. *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, tr., with notes, by R. W. Thomson, historical commentary by J. Howard-Johnston, assistance from T. Greenwood, Part I. *Translation and Notes* (Liverpool, 1999), 13.
7. R. W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History, The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles* (Oxford, 1996), 16.
8. T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Leiden, 1979), xxi. Most recently, see Z. Rubin, 'Ibn al-Muqaffa and the account of Sasanian history in the Arabic Codex Sprenger 30', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 30 (2005), 59.
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10. Ibid., T. Daryaee, 'Keyanid history or national history? The nature of Sāsānian Zoroastrian historiography', *The Journal of the Society for Iranian Studies*, 28(3–4) (1995), 135.

11. T. Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of An Empire* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 84–6.
12. S. P. Brock and S. A. Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (University of California Press, 1987).
13. S. Shaked, 'Administrative functions of priests in the Sasanian period', *Proceedings of the First European Conference Iranian Studies* (Magnes Press, 1990), 261–73.
14. For the English translation, see B. T. Anklesaria, *Zand ī Akāsīh, Iranian or Greater Bundahišn* (Bombay, 1956). For the Persian translation, see M. Bahār, *Bundahiš* (Tehran: Tūs Publication, 1369); and more importantly his *Bajūheš ī dar Asātīr-e Iran* (Tehran: Agah Publishers, 1375). For the transcription, see F. Pakzad, *Bundahišn: Zoroastrische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie* (Tehran: Band 1, 2005).
15. P. O. Skjærvø, 'Hymnic composition in the *Avesta*', *Die Sprache*, 136 (1994), 217–20.
16. Specifically Yašt XIX, see E. Pirart, *Kayan Yasn* (*Yasht* 19.9–96), *L'origine avestique des dynasties mythiques d'Iran* (Barcelona, 1992); A. Hintze, *Der Zamyad Yasht*. Edition, Uebersetzung, Kommentar. Reichert (Wiesbaden, 1994); H. Humbach and P. Ichaporia, *Zamyād Yasht. Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta. Text, Translation, Commentary* (Wiesbadeh, 1998).
17. See A. Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (Mazda Publishers, Persian translation 2005), 9–10, 20–1 also see his 'The vocabulary and syntax of iconography in Sasanian Iran,' *Iranica Antiqua*, XLIV (2009), 424–5, and his 'Farr(ah) ii. Iconography of Farr(ah)/Xvarənah', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, www.iranica.com/articles/farr-ii-iconography.
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19. See this author's forthcoming article entitled 'Once upon a time our ancestors ruled the world: from history to epic in late antique Iran', *La Parola del Passato*, guest ed. M. Compareti (forthcoming 2013).
20. See P. G. Kreyenbroeck, 'Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition,' *Imagining the End: visions of Apocalypse fro the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, eds A. Amanat and M. Bernhardsson (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 33–55.
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27. For the Persian translation, see A. Tafazzoli, *Mēnō-ye Khrad* (Tehran, 1364), 37.
28. *The Bondahesh, Being a Facsimile Edition of the Manuscript TD1* (Iranian Cultural Foundation 88, n.d.).
29. E. T. D. Anklesaria, *The Bundahishn, Being a Facsimile of the TD Manuscript*, No. 2 (Bombay, 1908).
30. *The Codex DH, Being a Facsimile Edition of Bondashesh, Zande-e Vohuman Yasht, and Parts of Denkart* (Iranian Cultural Foundation 89, n.d.).

6

Reverse Orientalism: Iranian reactions to the West

Farhang Jahanpour

In this chapter, I wish to look at a few instances of how Iran has viewed the West, especially during more recent times. In the same way that Western views of Iran have not always been uniform and have been influenced by the circumstances at different times, Iranian views of the West have also gone through a great deal of change, from unquestioning admiration to complete condemnation.

Orientalism

In his famous and highly influential book *Orientalism*, the late Edward Said describes Orientalism as 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.[1] He speaks of Orientalism as having developed a life of its own and having its own internal consistency, when a 'formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental "experts" and "hands" and "Oriental professorates" created a complex array of "Oriental ideas" (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use.'[2] According to Said: 'It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength I have been speaking about so far.'[3]

Although one may not agree completely with Said's bold generalisations about Orientalism – and it is interesting to note that he was mainly dealing with Western responses to Islamic and Arabic studies, with minor, passing references to great scholars of Persian Studies, such as E. G. Browne, R. A. Nicholson and A. J. Arberry – nevertheless, one cannot argue with the main thrust of his thesis that Orientalism is concerned with how the West sees the Orient, rather than how the Orient exists in reality or how the Orientals see themselves. Edward Said's vision, influenced by Antonio Gramsci's idea of culture as a form of subtle domination by the ruling classes[4] and Michel Foucault's notion of culture as discourse

and his insistence on finding a genealogy for knowledge in institutional contexts,[5] contains important insights.

One can argue that the reverse is also true, and the way that many Eastern people, especially Muslims and Iranians, have seen and continue to see the West is not how the West is in reality, but how the Easterners would like to see it or have been forced to see it. We are all victims of our past and our circumstances. We see the world from where we stand and there is nothing else that we can do. Therefore, the West saw the East with a Western bias, and vice versa. To this observation should be added the unequal relationship that has existed between the East and the West during the past few centuries, and especially the present cultural, political, economic and military domination of the Middle East by the West.

The emergence of Orientalism and counter-Orientalism

In the West, Orientalism is considered to have commenced its formal existence with the decision of the Church Council of Vienna in 1312 to establish a series of chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon and Salamanca.[6] The suggestion was Raymond Lull's, who advocated learning Arabic as the best means for the conversion of the Arabs. Chairs in Oriental languages had been founded at Paris, Louvain and Salamanca by 1311, but all of them suffered from the lack of teachers and reliable source material, and their interest was mainly by means of the propagation of Christianity in the Islamic lands, rather than in learning from the East.

The serious study of Orientalism started only in the seventeenth century, and the proper interchange between the academic and the more or less imaginative meanings of Orientalism dates from the end of the eighteenth century. In 1632 the Thomas Adams Chair of Arabic was established at Cambridge and, four years later, Archbishop Laud established a similar chair at Oxford. It is interesting that most of the famous holders of the Thomas Adams Chair of Arabic turned out to become Persian experts who devoted most of their time to Persian studies; from Professor Storey's erudite bibliography of Persian literature,[7] to E. G. Browne, the greatest Western scholar of Persian literature who was also very interested in a number of religious, mystical movements, to R. A. Nicholson, the great translator and interpreter of Rumi and Persian mysticism, and to Professor A. J. Arberry, with his numerous works on Rumi, Hafiz, Omar Khayyam and others.

This situation also found its parallel at Oxford. One of the most distinguished early English Orientalists was Thomas Hyde (1636–1703) of Oxford, who became Professor of Arabic and Librarian of the Bodleian. Though Professor of Arabic, one of Hyde's main interests was the ancient Persian religion

of Zoroaster. In about 1690 he had translated into Latin the first *Ghazals* of Hafiz. He is also to be credited with the first translation of a *Ruba'i* of Omar Khayyam. The first reference to Omar Khayyam is in the form of a quatrain attributed to Omar's ghost, who recited it in a dream to his mother, recorded in the *History of the Religion of the Ancient Persians, Parthians and Medes* by Dr Thomas Hyde in 1700.[8] Hyde's account of Zoroaster's religion was the principal source for Voltaire's article 'Zoroaster' in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* of 1764.[9]

Iranian contacts with the West

The first serious Iranian writings about the West, and particularly about Britain, date from the eighteenth century. Of course, the history of contact between Persia and the West goes back far longer and beyond the well-established contacts between the Persians and the Greeks, with many stories suggesting links with Iran. Starting from the earliest phases of Judaism, there was a great deal of physical and spiritual contact between the Hebrews and the Persians. The Bible contains many references to Iran, Iranian history and Iranian kings. Fourteen books of the Old Testament either directly deal with an event that happened in Iran, or contain references to Iran.[10] There was also a close connection between Christianity and Iran. The story of the three Magis or Zoroastrian priests visiting the new-born Jesus is well known. It is not, however, generally realised that Iran also played a leading role in the spread of Christianity. Many Christian churches were established in Iran when the Christians were still being savagely persecuted by the Roman Empire.[11]

According to legend, the first Persian to visit the British Isles was a certain bishop of the Nestorian Church named Ivon. In the sixth century, when the Nestorians were sending missionaries to India and China, Ivon is supposed to have gone in the opposite direction to England and to have resided there until his death. When a ploughman in the county of Huntingdon turned up his bones in the year 1001, the bishop straightaway became a saint and gave his name to the Church of St Ives built on the spot.[12]

In more historical times, the motives of the first Persian envoy sent to the West were more political. He is one of the suite of an envoy of the Ismailis of the Alamut. In 1238 he came to the courts of Paris and London during the reign of Henry III. He was sent by the Persian ruler Ala'ud-Din Muhammad to seek English help against the Mongol hordes of Chengis Khan (Genghis Khan). However, he received no encouragement from either source. As recorded in the travel accounts of William Rubrick, the Bishop of Winchester had taken the cross at that time. Being present at the audience, he exclaimed: 'Let those dogs devour each other and be utterly wiped out, and then we shall see, founded on

their ruins, the Universal Catholic Church, and there shall truly be one shepherd and one flock.'[13]

It was as the result of greater commercial and political interests between the West and the Safavid and Mughal governments that the interest in Persian studies developed. The works of travellers, merchants and diplomats, such as Anthony Jenkinson (1562), Thomas Alcock (1564), Richard Cheney (1564), John Newbury (1580) and Ralph Fitch (1583–91), the three English brothers Sir Thomas, Sir Anthony and Robert Sherley (who arrived in Qazvin in December 1598 and stayed in Iran for a long time, and even acted as Iran's ambassador to various European courts), Jean Chardin and Tavernier from France, introduced Persia to the West.

Sir Anthony Sherley, who with his brother Robert had many audiences with Shah Abbas – 'the Great Sophy', as they called him – claims that it was he who persuaded the Shah to seek alliance with the Christian princes of Europe against the Ottomans. Six months later, Sir Anthony Sherley was a member of a Persian mission to visit England and a number of other European courts. The mission included Hussein Ali Beg Bayat, often called Iran's first ambassador to England. One of the strangest episodes in Anglo-Persian relations was that, while the Persians sent an Englishman as their ambassador to Europe, a few decades later in 1798 the British sent an Iranian, Mehdi Ali Khan, as their ambassador to the court of Shah Abbas.[14]

It was during the Safavid period (1500–1722), too, that Iranians gained first-hand familiarity with the West. It should be borne in mind that it was not only as the result of the visit of Western merchants and diplomats to Iran that Iranians came into contact with the West. Many Iranians used to travel to the Caucasus and to Russia, visiting the Ottoman Empire, which had greater access to the West, and many more visited India where there was a strong and growing British presence.

Iran's contacts with Mughal India and later directly with British people in India and in Britain also provided grounds for Iranian familiarity with the West. Mir 'Abd al-Latif Shushtari (1758–1806), who travelled to India in 1788, provided some fascinating accounts of European modernity, modern astronomy and new scientific innovations in his *Tuhfat al-'Alam* (1216 H/1801).[15] Shushtari even made certain remarks about Western political and religious developments. He regarded the year 900 of Hijrah (AD 1494–5) as the beginning of a new era associated with the decline of the power (khilafat or caliphate) of the Pope, the weakening of the Christian clergy, the ascent of philosophy, and the strengthening of philosophers and scientists.[16] He described the English Civil War as the beginning of the decline of religion. Although both philosophers and rulers affirmed the unity of God, they viewed 'as myths' many religious concepts such as prophecy, resurrection and prayers.[17] Shushtari was also familiar with Western

scientific advances, and explained the views of Copernicus and Newton on heliocentricity and universal gravitation. He viewed Newton as a 'great sage and distinguished philosopher', and even went on to say that in view of Newton's accomplishments all 'the golden books of the ancients' are now 'similar to images on water'.[18]

His ideas and his familiarity with the West attracted the attention of the Qajar King Fath 'Ali Shah. Tavakoli-Targhi writes:

> Shushtari's critical reflections on European history and modern sciences was appreciated by Fath 'Ali Shah who assigned the historian Mirza Muhammad Sadiq Marvazi Vaqayi' Nigar (d. 1250/1834) the task of editing an abridged edition of *Tuhfat al-'Alam*, which is known as *Qava'id al-Muluk* (Axioms of Rulers).[19]

Tavakoli-Targhi refers to a number of other Iranian scholars, including Aqa Ahmad Bihbahani Kirmanshahi, Tafazul Husayn Khan and Maulavi Abu al-Khayr, who also travelled to India and became familiar with Western and especially British scientists. These scholars not only introduced Western concepts to Iran and India, but also expressed positive and enlightened views about the West.

Abu Taleb Khan (1752–1806) was another scholar of Iranian descent who flourished in India and contributed a great deal to improving the knowledge of the West in India and Iran. Born in Lucknow, he followed his father into the service of Muslim rulers of that region. Later on, the family moved to Bengal, where Abu Taleb encountered the administration of the British East India Company, then beginning to establish its rule in that province. Between the years 1799 and 1803, he spent four and a half years travelling to Europe and the Middle East. He sailed to England via the Cape of Good Hope, landing first in Ireland in 1799. After some time in Dublin, he moved on to London, where he rented lodgings in the richer part of the city and mixed with British nobility and aristocracy. He was even presented to the king and queen as a 'Persian prince', and managed to observe the courts, the parliament and other institutions, and the social culture and fashions of the times. On his return, he wrote a fascinating book about his travels called *Masir-i Talibi fi Bilad-i Ifranji* (Taleb's Travels in European Countries).[20] He was generally more admiring of his hosts than Western travellers were.

Despite his strong admiration for the British, he was not an uncritical observer. In his chapter on English character,[21] he provided a long list of the alleged vices and virtues of the English people, which provides a fascinating example of cultural criticism. He was most impressed by the individual rights that British people enjoyed and by the equality of people before the law. He wrote: 'The first circumstance that attracted my attention, and consequent applause of the English law, was the right which every British subject possesses, of being tried

by a jury.' He believed, however, that the excessive power of the judges and the lawyers' desire for personal gain, thus unnecessarily prolonging the court cases, were two factors that compromised the jury system. He complained: 'In short, the ambiguity of the English law is such, and the stratagems of the lawyers so numerous, as to prove a course of misery to those who are unfortunate enough to have any concern with it or them.'

He made a list of 12 alleged British vices, which included spending too much time on pampering and enjoying themselves, and too little time on work and business, their luxurious living, vanity and arrogance, extravagance, selfishness, lack of chastity, and their contempt for the customs of other nations. Nevertheless, he concludes: 'Many of these vices, or defects, are not natural to the English, but have been ingrafted on them by prosperity and luxury.' However, the consequences of those vices may not appear for a long time, firstly due to 'the strength of constitution, both of individuals and of the Government', and secondly due to the fact that all their European neighbours also shared such vices.

However, as opposed to those alleged vices, he provides a long list of their virtues, including: 'a high sense of honour, especially among the better classes'; their 'reverence for every thing or person possessing superior excellence'; their 'dread of offending against the rules of propriety, or the laws of the realm'; their 'strong desire to improve the situations of the common people, and an aversion to do anything which can injure them'; their 'adherence to the rules of fashion', which could also be regarded as a weakness; their 'passion for mechanism, and their numerous contrivances for facilitating labor and industry'; their 'plainness of manners, and sincerity of disposition'; and finally their hospitality.

After London, Abu Taleb Khan went to Paris, where he similarly observed the society, politics, customs and fashions of the French. His chapter on the 'Character of the French' is equally fascinating.[22] Of the French people he writes:

> The French in general, and especially the Parisians, are extremely courteous, affable, and flattering. They never make use of the simple words Yes or No, but have always some circuitous phrase ready, expressive of the honour you confer, or their regret. In pointing out the road, or explaining any thing to a foreigner, they are indefatigable, and consider such conduct as a proof of their good-breeding and humanity.

His journey back to India took him via Lyon and the Rhone Valley to Marseilles, and on to Genoa, Malta, and Constantinople. He also stopped in Baghdad and Basra, and as a Shi'ite he made a pilgrimage to Najaf and Karbala on the way. Finally, he returned by sea to Bombay and Calcutta, where he wrote the account of his amazing voyage.[23]

With the decline of Iranian military and political power, and the rise of Western influence and exploitation in Iran, the attitude of many Iranians towards

the West began to change. Admiration turned to opposition and in some cases to xenophobia. The new anti-Western attitude was mainly led by the clerics, who in addition to having nationalistic feelings were averse to the West on religious grounds.

One of the leading Iranian reformers who helped mobilise the masses against the corrupt and dictatorial Qajar dynasty and its foreign backers was Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (better known as al-Afghani).[24]

Afghani (1838–97), who was a precursor to Ayatollah Khomeini, already demonstrated an example of the dual role of the Shi'a clergy, both as religious leaders and as political agitators. He travelled extensively in India, the Middle East and Europe, and wherever he went he agitated against the British and Russian domination of Islamic countries. He was fluent in Arabic and some European languages and was a fiery preacher. For a time, he served as professor of Islamic philosophy at the prestigious Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

It is ironic that Afghani has a reputation as a champion of Islam and the founder of Pan-Islamism, as this was only a political ploy for mobilising the masses against foreign domination. Although he couched his political message in Islamic terms, at heart he seems to have been quite hostile to Islam. In the Ottoman Empire he campaigned for the strengthening of the role of the Islamic caliphate and organising opposition against the Russians, in India he agitated against the British rule, while in Iran he urged Nasir al-Din Shah to expel the British and the Russians from the country. However, despite his Islamic pretences, he was basically a political animal and was using Islam only in order to achieve his political ends. For example, when he was visiting Europe, he engaged in dialogues with a number of orientalists and corresponded with the famous French philosopher and orientalist Ernest Renan. Responding to a pamphlet by Renan in which he had criticised the negative influences of Christianity in Europe, Afghani argued that these negative influences were not limited to Christianity. He maintained that all religions, including Islam, were fundamentally against reason and civilisation. He blamed Islam for being responsible for the backwardness of Muslim countries. In an incredible passage he argued that the problem did not lie with 'unscientific Arab mentality', but with Islam itself:

> It is permissible to ask oneself why Arab civilization after having thrown such a live light on the world, suddenly became extinguished, why this torch has not been lit since, and why the Arab world remains buried in profound darkness. Here the responsibility of the Muslim religion appears complete. It is clear that wherever it became established, this religion tried to stifle science and was marvellously served in its design by political despotism. Al-Siuti tells us that Caliph al-Hadi put to death in Baghdad 5,000 philosophers in order to extirpate science in Muslim countries up to their roots […] I could find in the past of the Christian religion analogous facts.

Figure 6.1: Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani.

> Religions, whatever names they are given, all resemble one another. No agreement and no reconciliation are possible between these religions and philosophy. Religion imposes on man its faith and its belief, whereas philosophy frees him of it totally or in part.[25]

Afghani led a strong campaign against Nasir al-Din Shah from exile, and it was one of his pupils and associates who assassinated the Shah in 1896 while he was visiting a shrine near Tehran at the beginning of celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of his reign. The bullet that killed Nasir al-Din Shah also marked the beginning of the end of the Qajar regime, and the start of the Constitutional Movement (1905–11).

Sheykh Muhammad Husain Na'ini (1850–1936), the pro-constitutionalist cleric, was another Iranian reformer strongly impressed by Western democracy. He argued in favour of a representative and democratic government based on a constitution.[26] He believed that such a government would be the best possible form of government in the absence of a government led by the Prophet or the Hidden Imam.[27] He maintained that a tyrannical and despotic ruler was guilty of idolatry (*shirk*), the cardinal sin in Islam, because he arrogated to himself the power that belonged to God and to the people as God's vicegerents on earth.

Use of 'Westoxification' as a political tool

Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–69) and Ali Shari'ati (1933–77) were perhaps the two most influential writers in Iran whose ideas had a great impact on the young and on university-educated people, and paved the way for the Islamic revolution. Both Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati came from clerical backgrounds, turned leftist and then turned back to religion again. Al-e Ahmad's grandfather, father, older brother, two brothers-in-law and a nephew were all clerics. Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani, the famous revolutionary cleric from Tehran who played a very prominent role during and after the Islamic revolution, was Al-e Ahmad's cousin. In 1943, Al-e Ahmad was sent by his father to Najaf as a *talabeh* (seminary student) to be trained as a mullah under the supervision of his older brother. After a short stay in Najaf he abandoned his religious studies and returned to Iran; in his own words: 'Fed up and stifled and turning my back on both my father and my brother. Because on that journey I had seen a trap in the form of a mantle and a cloak.'[28]

Having rebelled against his religious background, he threw himself heart and soul into political activities and became an active member of the communist Tudeh Party of Iran. Within a year, he was a member of the Tehran provincial committee and the co-editor of a party newspaper. In 1948 he was a member

Figure 6.2: Al-e Ahmed pictured with his wife.

of the group that under the leadership of Khalil Maleki broke away from the mainline Tudeh Party and set up a new group (*enshe'ab*), which was still firmly within the framework of Marxism-Leninism. On the afternoon of 17 January 1948, Moscow Radio openly attacked the new group, charging its members with treachery. Instead of remaining faithful to their principles, Al-e Ahmad and most of those who had signed the declaration of *enshe'ab* immediately signed a new statement announcing the dissolution of the new party. Al-e Ahmad joined a number of other leftist parties, but after the 1953 coup he issued a 'renunciation', saying that he had ceased all his political activities and did not belong to any party. However, the influence of his twin early affiliations, to religious orthodoxy and to communism, remained with him throughout his life. His fundamentalist background instinctively set him against change and modernism, and his Tudeh background made him doubly hostile towards any modernisation associated with the West.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad's famous book *Gharbzadegi* became the most important manifesto of all those who resented the excessive influence of the West in Iran.[29] The word *Gharbzadegi* was coined by Ahmad Fardid, Al-e Ahmad's friend and professor of philosophy at the University of Tehran, but it was due to Al-e Ahmad that the term achieved such fame and influence. *Gharbzadegi*, which has been translated as 'disease of Westernism', 'Westitis', 'Westernosis', 'Westomania', 'Weststrickenness' 'Weststruckedness', 'plagued by the West' or 'Westoxication', starts with the following words:

> I speak of being afflicted with 'westitis' the way I would speak of being afflicted with cholera. If this is not palatable let us say it is akin to being stricken by heat or by cold. But it is not either. It is something more on the order of being attacked by tongue worm. Have you ever seen how wheat rots? From within. The husk remains whole, but it is only an empty shell like the discarded chrysalis of a butterfly hanging from a tree. In any case, we are dealing with a sickness, a disease imported from abroad, and developed in an environment receptive to it.[30]

He defines the West as the developed or industrialised countries which,

> with the aid of machines, are capable of converting raw materials into something more complex and marketing it in the form of manufactured goods. These raw materials are not just iron ore or oil or gut or cotton, or tragacanth. They are also myths, principles of belief, music, and transcendental realities.[31]

The problem with Al-e Ahmad's assessment of the West is that although he describes Western superiority and domination as the result of its mastery of the 'machine', he is not sure whether it is a good thing for Iranians to master the machine as the Westerners have done or not. On the one hand, he seems to suggest that in order to be freed from Western domination, it is essential for Iranians to become industrialised. He says: 'As long as we are solely consumers, as long as we do not manufacture machines, we shall be afflicted with the West.' On the other hand, he believes that the mastery of the machine will also lead to being plagued by the West: 'And the ironic part is that as soon as we are able to make machines, we shall become machine-stricken! We shall be like people of the West whose cries about self-willed technology and machines are heard everywhere.'[32] He refers to *La France contre les Robots* by George Bernanos[33] as an example of Western disenchantment with the machines.

At times, he seems to forget that Western technological development is only the product of the past few centuries, and his Western plague becomes synonymous with Christianity. He complains: 'How can we view these twelve centuries of struggle and competition as anything but a struggle between Islam and Christianity?'[34] Yet at other times, in a complete distortion of the meaning of the words, he goes on to say:

> We know that, in his youth, the Prophet traded with Syria and that he spoke with a certain monk there. And was there ever any easier way to proselytise than with the cry 'Say: There is no God but Allah and ye shall prosper?' Moreover, in the final analysis, was not our turning towards Islam a turning towards the West? We will be able to provide a precise answer to this question once we have learned what incredible injustices were visited on people as a result of the ossified customs of the Sasanians.[35]

However, despite these inconsistencies, maybe even because of this rejection of whatever was foreign and alien, whether Islam, Christianity, the Crusades or European civilisation and modern machines, Al-e Ahmad struck a sympathetic chord in the hearts of the young people who were fed up with the loss of their identity and with a veneer of Westernisation, and who were searching for native authenticity. Despite the general mixing of praise and blame for Islam and strongly criticising the behaviour of the Safavid clergy who, according to Al-e Ahmad, were responsible for Iran's subsequent backwardness, the major message that can be deducted from *Gharbzadegi* is a kind of return to 'genuine, progressive' Islam (whatever that might be).

In his later writings, such as *Dar Khedmat va Khiyanat-e Rowshanfekran* (On the Services and Treasonable Activities of Intellectuals), Al-e Ahmad advocated an alliance between intellectuals and the clergy against the Pahlavi regime. In 1962, when Jalal's father died, Ayatollah Khomeini arranged a memorial service for him, after which the two men met and Khomeini spoke approvingly of Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi*. In another meeting between the two men in Qom in Esfand 1341 (February/March 1963), Al-e Ahmad suggested an alliance between the intellectuals and the mullahs against the shah. Shaking hands with Khomeini, Al-e Ahmad is reputed to have stated: 'We will defeat the government if we continue holding hands.'[36]

A year later, Al-e Ahmad went on pilgrimage to Mecca, and *Khasi dar Miqat* (Lost in the Crowd) is the account of that journey. The same love-hate relationship and an attitude of reverence and revulsion can be seen in this interesting account, in which he talks approvingly of the unity that exists between the pilgrims from all over the world who have come with sincerity and intense faith to perform their religious duty of pilgrimage. At the same time, he talks about the coarseness and crudeness of the crowds and speaks of the arrangements of pilgrimage as 'mechanised barbarism'.[37] He was one of the first people to say that the control of Hajj ceremonies should be taken out of the hand of the Saudi authorities and be given to an international organisation composed of Muslims from all over the world. This idea found favour with a number of Islamic activists in Iran during the first few years after the victory of the Islamic revolution, when there were numerous clashes between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi authorities.

Dariush Shayegan

Professor Dariush Shayegan is one of Iran's prominent thinkers, cultural theorists and comparative philosophers. He is very well read both in Western philosophy, as well as in Hindu and Islamic philosophies. He has published a number of works on the theme of Iran's encounter with the West. In one of his

books, *Idols of the Mind and Perennial Memory*, first published in 1975,[38] he argues that in order to understand the intensity of the challenge which Iran and the East generally face in their encounter with the West, it is important that they understand the main differences between the two world views. He writes: 'As opposed to our "poetic-mythological" [*sha'eraneh-asatiri*] world view, the Western worldview is based on "rationalism and realism or experimentalism" [*ta'aqoli-hosuli*]. In the West, truth is merely something which can be proved by experiment and tests.' According to him, the 'rationalisation' of every manifestation of reality was accompanied by 'de-mythologising'.

He says that the ultimate outcome of this de-mystification and de-mythologising of reality, and reliance upon rationalism and experimentation, has led the West to the worship of man and history, and has been summed up in Nietzsche's famous statement that 'God is dead' and his concept of replacing the traditional view of God with a superman. The development of Western philosophy from Descartes to Karl Marx has turned nature itself into something purely materialistic, and has turned man into a 'working animal' and ultimately to nihilism and existentialism.[39]

He studies the consequences of this kind of thinking for Western art and the influence that it has had on Eastern and Persian art. He believes that this influence has led to a kind of artistic and intellectual chaos and disorder, which has encouraged blind imitation of everything Western. While Western art and architecture have developed out of a long process of intellectual development and rationalism during the past few centuries in the West, the imitated Iranian art, unlike Iran's traditional art and miniatures which were deeply rooted in Iranian national and intellectual consciousness, has no roots and does not reflect the deeper artistic feelings of the people.

He believes that Iran and other Eastern countries are passing through a period of intellectual and artistic stagnation and transition (*fetrat*). Although he regrets the passing of Iran's 'poetic-mythological' world view, Professor Shayegan seems to suggest that we do not have any strong defences against the Western onslaught. He writes:

> In the face of the Western intellectual onslaught which believes in experimentalism and rationalism which has resulted in a technological age with its amazing material gains and technical ability, our poetic view of the world seems incongruous, brittle, reactionary and, according to some, it is even acting as a break in the path of progress.[40]

He blames all those who either totally reject or totally adopt what the West has to offer.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

The most anti-Western movement in Iran and at that time in the Islamic world as a whole was, of course, represented by the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini had little knowledge and even less interest in the West. During the few months that he stayed in Paris, his aides Abol-Hasan Bani-Sadr and Sadeq Qotbzadeh tried to arrange a tour of Paris for him. His response was that he was not interested. His interview shortly after returning to Iran with Oriana Fallaci was quite revealing.[41] He strongly criticised 'the decadent Western civilisation'. Asked about whether Iranians would be permitted to listen to Western music, he said that Iranians should not listen to 'obscene and vulgar Western music'. Oriana Fallaci asked about the music of Bach, Beethoven or Mozart. Ayatollah Khomeini said that he had not heard about them, but in any case Iranians should not listen to vulgar Western music.

Prior to the victory of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini had promised to respect people's democratic rights, including equal rights for women and for religious and ethnic minorities. He had gone along with the views of secular opposition, including *Jebhe-ye Melli* (the National Front) and Engineer Mehdi Bazargan, the founder of the Freedom Movement, to let the people elect a Constituent Assembly to decide the form of the next government. However, after coming to power, he established an Assembly of Experts (dominated by clerics who were allegedly experts in Islamic law), and this assembly drew up the constitution of the Islamic Republic in keeping with Islamic principles. The whole system was based on the novel concept of the *Velayat-e Faqih*, or the

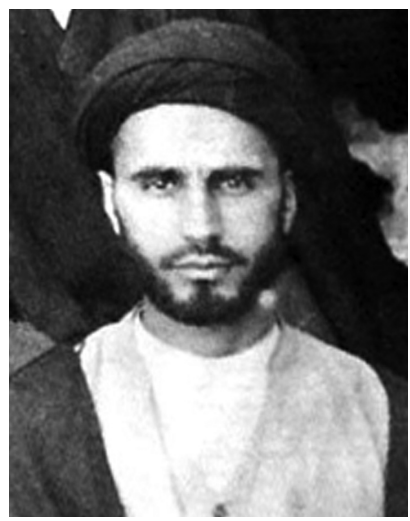

Figure 6.3: Ruhollah Khomeini as a young man.

rule of the chief jurisprudent, which would perpetuate not only the involvement of the clergy in politics, but their virtual control of all the levers of power, including the government, the judiciary and the legislature. This concept, which had no precedent in the history of Islam, enshrined the power of the clergy over the state and resulted in the creation of a theocracy.

In a series of lectures that Ayatollah Khomeini had given during his exile in Najaf between 21 January and 8 February 1970 on the issue of *Velayat-e Faqih*, which were ignored at the time but were later compiled and published under the title of *Hukumat-i Islami* (Islamic Government), he had elaborated his views about the role of the clergy in politics.[42] In those lectures he said that in the absence of the Prophet and the Shi'i Imams, as experts in Islamic law, the jurists have the right and the duty to be in charge of government, as the implementation of Islamic law requires the power of the government. He asserted:

> It is an established principle that the *faqih* has authority over the ruler. If the ruler adheres to Islam, he must necessarily submit to the *faqih*, asking him about the laws and ordinances of Islam in order to implement them. This being the case, the true rulers are *fuqaha* themselves, and rule ought officially to be theirs.[43]

Speaking about the role of the parliament and its legislative power, he maintained that the Islamic government has no choice but to implement the laws of the Qur'an. He goes on to say:

> Islamic government may therefore be defined as the rule of divine laws over men […] The Sacred Legislator of Islam is the sole legislative power. No one has the right to legislate and no law may be executed except the law of Divine Legislator.[44]

After gaining power, he wasted no time in translating his vision into reality, and thus the rule by the clergy became the cornerstone of the new political system, with all that it entailed for the rejection of Western-style democracy.

In all his speeches after the victory of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini spoke with contempt and hostility about the West, which he regarded as the deadly enemy of Islam and Muslims. One of his main campaigns was to rid the country of Western influences. In order to do so, he closed the universities for two years to purge them of Western-oriented staff. His attitude to Iranian intellectuals and writers who had done so much for the cause of the revolution was to dismiss them as agents of foreigners. In his 6 May 1978 interview with *Le Monde*, Khomeini referred to Iranian intellectuals and writers as 'agents of the shah' and lackeys of the superpowers, and warned the faithful to steer clear of their influence. Later, he issued a religious proclamation addressed to university students in which he accused the country's intelligentsia of seeking only

ministerial or parliamentary posts. 'These writers,' he said, 'who have thus far neither taken a step nor done anything for Islam have now found, in the name of patriotism and love of freedom, an opportunity […] have picked up their pens and are hypocritically scribbling certain things.'[45]

In March 1979, only one month after Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Iran, some members of the Writers' Association of Iran arranged for an audience with him. Simin Daneshvar, the widow of Al-e Ahmad and herself a famous writer, as the representative of the group, began by congratulating Khomeini on his return from exile and his successful leadership of the Iranian revolution. She then recounted for him the history of the Association's struggle against the shah's regime, and concluded by pointing out the hopes of the country's writers for intellectual and artistic freedom. In response, Ayatollah Khomeini bade the writers to follow the path of Islam. In practice, a few months later, Hezbollahi thugs attacked the meetings of the Writers' Association, their publications were banned by the government and most of the leading figures of the Association were forced to flee the country, and some of them are still living in exile. Of those who were left behind, a few were executed, some were imprisoned, and the rest had to engage in intellectual and artistic self-censorship by refusing to write or speak in public. Ayatollah Khomeini's remark about the West, that 'America is worse than England, England is worse than America, Russia is worse than both of them, and every one of them is worse than the other', has become quite famous.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammad Khatami

About 20 years after the victory of the Islamic revolution and a continuous campaign against the West, things started to change in an unexpected and dramatic manner. One result of the Islamic revolution had been the politicisation of the mullahs, which had meant that instead of engaging in mere rhetoric, they had to come face to face with international realities. The eight-year war with Iraq, as the result of which close to a million Iranians had been killed and wounded, and in which a huge segment of Iranian society, especially the young, had been politicised, resulted in profound disaffection with the more radical aspects of Ayatollah Khomeini's legacy. This led to a new and rather unexpected rise of reformist Islamic discourse.

The reformist movement was led by the young and educated classes, especially by university students and a number of religious and secular thinkers, including journalists and dissident religious thinkers and clerics such as Abdol-Karim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari, Akbar Ganji, Ahmad Qabel and many others. When Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammad Khatami, who became Iran's fifth president after the Islamic revolution on 3 August 1997,

was still the minister of culture and Islamic guidance in the cabinet of President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, he was invited by the Islamic Society of the University of Tehran to address a large gathering of the members of that society.

In his address, he warned those committed and ideologically charged students against under-estimating the challenge of the West, which he called 'the main ideological rival of the Islamic world view'. Enumerating some of the main achievements of Western civilisation, such as scientific and technological development, rationalism, individual freedom and democracy, he went on to say:

> We should not forget that our main ideological rival enjoys a powerful and deep-rooted intellectual and political world-view. The contemporary world view that has been moulded by the West is based upon a rational philosophy. The Western world view has been formed in the course of many centuries, and its intellectual bases have been carefully formulated. Western philosophy has been analysed and elucidated from different angles by hundreds of great scholars in the course of many centuries. It has passed through many stages. It has been tested by time. It has evolved and has matured. It has given birth to diverse intellectual schools of thought. The important point to remember is that Western intellectual and political value-system is in keeping with man's basic instincts. Basically, human nature is instinctively in favour of that intellectual system and supports that ideology. The foundations of modern world view are based on freedom.[46]

Later on, addressing university students in Tehran on 23 May 1998, on the first anniversary of his election as president, he said:

> Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to say candidly that social acceptance of religion today and its fate tomorrow depend on our ability to see religion in such a way as to be compatible with freedom. If you look at human history, you see that whatever has opposed freedom, even if it has been the greatest of human virtues, has suffered a setback. If religion has come to stand up against freedom, it has sustained a loss, and if justice has denied freedom, it has been undermined. If progress and development have forestalled freedom, they too have been damaged. When we speak of freedom, we mean the freedom of the opposition. It is no freedom if only the people who agree with those in power and with their ways and means are free. Now, I can give you one or two historical examples already known to you who are well read. The first is the experience of the Medieval Age when religion and freedom were set against each other and, consequently, religion was defeated. The other and more contemporary instance has been communism, which pursued economic justice at the expense of freedom. The result was that communism was also defeated and freedom triumphed.[47]

Khatami has written eloquently about the achievements of Western civilisation, especially its advocacy of democracy, freedom and human rights.[48] He has called

for a 'Dialogue of Civilisations' and the need for the Islamic and Western civilisations to learn from each other. It is also worth remembering that in the days after 11 September 2001, Iran was one of the first nations to offer sympathy to the Americans for that atrocity, as thousands of Iranians took part in spontaneous candlelit vigils in Tehran and other Iranian cities. Iran's President Mohammad Khatami, in an interview with CNN, expressed his 'deepest condolences to the American nation and […] sorrow for the tragic event of September 11. What occurred was a disaster […] the ugliest form of terrorism ever seen.' He made some of the most eloquent remarks in condemnation of the terrorists by saying: 'They have self-mutilated their hearts, minds, tongues, eyes and ears and can only communicate in the language of violence.'

However, despite a promising dawn, the reformist movement in Iran failed for two main reasons. The first reason was internal rivalry and the attempts by right-wing extremists to protect their privileged positions and their hold on power. The second reason was an inadequate and indeed negative response by the West to Iran's outstretched hand.

The backlash from the hardliners resulted in the closing down of scores of reformist newspapers by the conservative-dominated judiciary, and the arresting and jailing of a large number of reformist intellectuals on trumped-up charges. Massive student demonstrations – the biggest since the establishment of the Islamic Republic – in protest against the closing of *Salam*, a leading reformist newspaper, were brutally put down, resulting in the death and injury of a large number of students. Many resolutions by the reformist parliament that were aimed at limiting the power of the clergy and at giving a degree of freedom to the citizens were rejected by the Guardian Council as having violated the Shari'a or the constitution. The massive onslaught by the hardliners and the weak response by Khatami's government eroded the initial mood of optimism and weakened the reformist movement.

The second reason for the failure of the reformist government was Western indifference and even hostility to the most promising development in Iran since the inception of the Islamic revolution. Khatami's call for the 'Dialogue of Civilisations' – as opposed to the 'Clash of Civilisations' – went unheeded, and Western attempts to bring about a regime change in Iran continued unabated. The West concentrated all its propaganda on Iran's nuclear programme, while ignoring the positive changes in Iran that could have rendered the hyped-up nuclear programme harmless.

Many hardliners came to the conclusion that the West was not interested in dialogue and the best option would be to prepare for a confrontation. The example of Iraq that did not pose any threat to the West, and was in a weak military position and was nevertheless attacked by the United States, convinced the hardliners that the best form of defence was offence, and that if Iran were

to escape the fate of Iraq, it had no option but to bolster its defences. Even before the end of President Khatami's term, many hardliners turned to the young generation of the revolutionary guards for possible alternatives to the reformist government. Mahmud Ahmadinezhad, a former guards commander and a right-wing activist, was the person chosen to perform that task. Therefore, he was selected to run against the reformist candidates in the June 2005 presidential election.

Meanwhile, the reformist vote was split between the three reformist candidates: Mostafa Mo'in, the former president of Tehran University; Mehdi Karrubi, the former Majlis speaker; and Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the former two-term president. During the first round of the election, the total number of votes cast for the three reformist candidates far exceeded the votes cast for Mahmud Ahmadinezhad. Throughout the night as the votes were being counted, the election headquarters announced that there would be a run-off election between Mehdi Karrubi and Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, but at the last moment it was announced that Mahmud Ahmadinezhad's votes had exceeded those of Karrubi and that the run-off election would be between Ahmadinezhad and Hashemi-Rafsanjani.[49] In the second round of voting Ahmadinezhad emerged triumphant, partly due to the disenchantment of the reformers with Hashemi-Rafsanjani, who was regarded as a very wealthy and corrupt man with weak reformist credentials, and partly due to the massive mobilisation of the revolutionary guards and members of the Basij militia by the conservatives to vote for Ahmadinezhad.

With Ahmadinezhad's victory, the process of reforms was reversed and a much more militant government, which openly declared that it wanted to revive the early revolutionary vision based on Ayatollah Khomeini's teachings, came to power. Domestically, the new government adopted a much more restrictive and conservative approach towards some social issues, such as women's clothing, freedom of expression and different forms of civil society activities. At the same time, it adopted populist economic policies with the slogan that it wanted to bring the oil money to people's tables. It began to give grants and free loans to low-income families, and subsidised many food items. It also engaged in unabashed propagation of superstitious ideas, such as alleged contacts with the Hidden Imam in a well in Jamkaran near Qom. Early in his presidential term, his cabinet allocated the equivalent of $17 million for the Jamkaran Mosque. He even started his speeches at the United Nations General Assembly with prayers for the speedy return of the Hidden Imam.

In his foreign policy, he adopted a more hostile attitude towards the West and turned towards greater militarism. Due to the appointment of many former revolutionary guards' commanders to senior positions in the government, it came to be popularly known as the 'government of the barracks'. The new government

decided to renew uranium enrichment as it maintained that the West had not lived up to its part of the bargain after Iran's suspension of this activity.

With the failure of the government's economic policies and Iran's growing isolation in the world, Ahmadinezhad lost a great deal of his earlier popularity. It was clear that he would not win a second term as president if there were a free and fair election. The 12 June 2009 election witnessed a massive turnout by the reformers, and by all accounts the main reformist candidate Mir-Hoseyn Musavi won a resounding victory, but with the intervention of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, who was nervous about the victory of the reformers, the results of the election were rigged and Ahmadinezhad was declared the winner.[50] There followed unprecedented demonstrations by millions of voters in Tehran and throughout Iran, questioning the election results.

Instead of responding to people's call for a thorough investigation of the way that votes were counted, the government accused the opposition of being agents of a foreign-inspired 'velvet revolution', and it started a massive crackdown on the opposition, as the result of which dozens were killed, hundreds were wounded and thousands of demonstrators and reformist activists were arrested. Reformist newspapers were closed and houses and headquarters of the two main reformist leaders, Mir-Hoseyn Musavi and Mehdi Karrubi, were attacked, and they have been placed under house arrest.

Mahmud Ahmadinezhad has tried to align the Islamic Republic ever closer with the Islamic opposition in the Middle East and beyond, and to turn militant Islam into a political and ideological challenge to the West. However, what the entire history of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the past 31 years has proven is that it has no answers to the contemporary global challenges. Militant Islam, whether in the form of the Shi'i revolution in Iran or the Sunni Wahhabi fundamentalists as represented by Saudi Arabia, the al-Qaida and the Taleban, have contributed nothing to international discourse except violence, intolerance and rejection of modernity. There is also an inner-Islamic clash between individualism and conformity, between innovation and stagnation, between tolerance and fanaticism, between modernity and the past, between democracy and despotism, and between freedom and oppression.

Notes

1. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (first published by Routledge, 1978) (Penguin Books, 1995), 3.
2. Ibid., 4.
3. Ibid., 7.
4. Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks: Selections*, tr. and ed. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

5. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* (1966) (The Order of Things) (Pantheon Books, 1970); *L'Archéologie du Savoir* (1969) (The Archaeology of Knowledge) (Routledge, 1972); and *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* (1975) (Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison) (Gullimard, 1977).
6. R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); quoted in Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (first published by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978; repr. Penguin Books, 1995), 49–50. See also Francis Dvornik, *The Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 65–6.
7. C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (Leiden, 1927)
8. See Hyde, Thomas, 1636–1703. *Historia religionis veterum Persarum, eorumque magorum [microform]: ubi etiam nova Abrahami, and Mithrae, and Vestae, and Manetis, &c. historia, atque angelorum officia and praefecturae ex veterum Persarum sententia: item, perfarum annus.* The *Sad dar* is translated into Latin, from the Persian metrical paraphrase by Iranshah of the original Pahlavi. Oxonii: [s.n.], 1700. Location: Microfilms; Call #= Microfilm A2791 539:2.
9. See Hyde Thomas, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, www.iranica.com/articles/hyde.
10. See Shaul Shaked (ed.), *Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages* (1982), 292–303; quoted by Haydeh Sahim, *Iran Nameh*, vol. XV(1) (Winter 1997), 52.
11. For information about the history of early Christian churches in Iran, see Bishop H. B. Dehqani-Tafti, *Christ and Christianity Among the Iranians* (in Persian) (London: Sohrab Books, 1992), vol. I, 13–28.
12. John D. Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America: A 200-Year History* (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), x.
13. *The Journey of William Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World 1253–55* as narrated by himself, translated from Latin with an introductory notice by William Woodville Rockill, Hakluyt Society, 1900, xiv.
14. See Denis Wright, *The Persians Amongst the English: Episodes in Anglo-Persian History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1985), 9–24.
15. Mir 'Abdul-Latif Khan Shushtari, *Tuhfat al-'alam va zayl al-tuhfah*, ed. S. Muvahhid (Tehran: Tahuri, 1984).
16. See Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Modernity, Schizochronia, and homeless texts', The Third Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies, Bethesda, Maryland, 25–28 May 2000.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. For an English translation of the book, see *The Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa, and Europe during the Years 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803*, translated by Charles Stewart, printed by R. Watts, Broxbourne, Herts; London 1814, 3 vols. Available at www.archive.org/stream/travelsmizraabu01khgoog#page/n309/mode/1up.
21. Vol. 2, ch. XX, 27–54. All subsequent quotations about the British are from this chapter.
22. Vol. 2, ch. XXIV, 32–145.

23. For a brief summary of the travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, see Denis Wright, *The Persians Amongst the English: Episodes in Anglo-Persian History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1985), 44–52. See also Juan R. I. Cole, 'Invisible Occidentalism: Eighteenth-Century Indo-Persian constructions of the West', in *Iranian Studies*, 25(3–4) (1992), 3–16.
24. For an excellent study of Asadabadi, see Nikki Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani'* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972).
25. Quoted in N. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani'* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972), 193.
26. Muhammad Husain Na'ini, *Admonition to the Nation and Exposition to the People* (1909).
27. The Shi'is believe that the last Imam, Imam al-Mahdi, did not die but is in hiding, and will return one day to establish peace and justice.
28. '*Gozaresh az Khuzestan, Karnameh-ye Seh Saleh*', in *Ketab-e Zaman*, n.d., 67. Quoted in Robert Wells, *Jalal Al-e Ahmad: Writer and Political Activist* (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, May 1983), 67.
29. For an English translation of this book, see Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Plagued by the West*, translated by Paul Sprachman (Bibliotheca Persica, Caravan Books, New York, 1982). All references will be to this book. There are at least two other English translations of this work.
30. *Plagued by the West*, 3.
31. Ibid., 3.
32. Ibid., 7.
33. Paris: Pilon, 1970.
34. Ibid., 9.
35. Ibid., 17.
36. Quoted in Robert Wells, *Jalal al-e Ahmad: Writer and Political Activist* (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, May 1983), 124.
37. This book has been translated into English as *Lost in the Crowd*, translated by John Green with Ahmad Alizadeh and Farzin Yazdanfar (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1985).
38. Dariush Shayegan, *Botha-ye Zehni va Khatere-ye Azali* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 2535 Imperial Calendar/1975).
39. Ibid., 87–8.
40. Ibid., 90.
41. See Oriana Fallaci, '*Interview a Khomini*', *Corriere della Sera*, 26 September 1979.
42. For a translation of this work, see *Imam Khomeini, Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations*, translated and annotated by Hamid Algar (London: KPI Ltd, 1985), 27–166. Vilayat also means vice-regency, and both meanings of the word are intended here; namely, the *faqih* should rule as a vice-regent of the Hidden Imam.
43. Ibid., 60.
44. Ibid., 56.
45. Ruhollah Khomeini, 'Statement addressed to university students', quoted in Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, 'Protest and perish: a history of the Writers' Association of Iran', in *Iranian Studies*, XVIII(2–4) (Spring-Autumn 1985), 214–15.
46. Quoted in Persian monthly *Sobh*, Khordad 1376 (May 1997), 18.

47. See BBC Monitoring's translation of his speech at the University of Tehran, 24 May 1998.
48. See Mohammad Khatami, *Az Donya-ye Shahr ta Shahr-e Donya* (Tehran: Ney Publication, 1994); *A'in va Andisheh dar Dam-e Khodkamegi* (Tehran: Tarh-e Now, 2000).
49. In Iranian elections, if a candidate does not receive more than 50 per cent of the votes, there will be a run-off election between the two candidates with the largest number of votes.
50. For a study of the outcome of the election, see Professor Ali M. Ansari *et al.*, *Preliminary Analysis of the Voting Figures in Iran's 2009 Presidential Election* (Chatham House, 21 June 2009); and 'Urban myths revisited' (Chatham House, July 2010); Farhang Jahanpour, 'Iran's stolen election, and what comes next', *Open Democracy*, 18 June 2009 – www.opendemocracy.net/article/iran-s-stolen-election-and-what-comes-next.

7

Herodotus' Cyrus and political freedom

Lynette Mitchell

Writing in the late fifth century, Herodotus sees the world in terms of Greeks and barbarians, and declares in his Preface that he is making an enquiry (*historia*) into the great and wondrous deeds of the Greeks and barbarians, and the reasons why they fought each other.[1] He also divides it spatially, into Europe and Asia, with the Persians as the rulers of all Asia (1.4.4, 9.116.3).[2] Indeed, Herodotus was very interested in Persians, to the extent that it is sometimes said that his is a story about Persians rather than Greeks.

The stereotype of the enslaving Persian king, who threatens Greek freedom, dominates Herodotus' narrative. The Greeks, however, resist because of their desperate love of freedom and abhorrence of slavery. The point is eloquently made by the two Spartans who are sent to Susa in reparation for the assassination of Persian ambassadors, who had been pushed into a well after asking for earth and water as tokens of submission to Darius, the Great King.[3] They broke their journey at the home of the satrap of Asia Minor, Hydarnes. When the satrap suggested to them that the king might give them authority in Greece if they submitted to him, Herodotus has the two Spartans reply (7.135):

> Hydarnes, the counsels you present to us are not of equal value. You give advice about some things having tested them, but in other things you lack experience. For you know well how to be a slave, but are not at all experienced in freedom, or know whether it is sweet or not. For if you tried freedom, you would not counsel us to fight for it just with spears, but even with axes.

In the Constitution Debate between the Persian conspirators to decide which constitution they should adopt, Otanes also attacks monarchy with some earnestness. Using Cambyses as an example, he argues that monarchs can do whatever they want without regulation, and are so corrupted by arrogance and envy that they overturn ancestral laws, rape women and murder whomever they please (3.80.3–5).[4]

On the other hand, in his speech in the Constitution Debate, Darius argues that monarchy is inevitable, since it is the only resolution for the problems of oligarchy and democracy. It is also the constitutional form towards which these other institutions will naturally tend, and for this reason monarchy is shown to be the best form of constitution (3.82.2–5). That monarchy is unavoidable is not a strong rational argument in itself, although it might be compelling in one sense. Darius' trump card, however, is that unlike democracy and oligarchy, the Persians were set free by one man, and for that reason the ancestral constitution should be maintained.

That one man was Cyrus. Although finally, like other Asiatic monarchs, he desired too much, did not remember that the gods are envious, and so found a violent end at the hands of the Massagetae, Herodotus' Cyrus challenges the stereotype of the enslaving monarch, and provides an alternative model for ruling and being ruled. This chapter begins by looking at Herodotus' treatment of monarchs, and especially the Persian kings. It then turns to the issue of political freedom and its values and consideration of how Herodotus developed a model of freedom that was based not on slavery but on political strength. Finally, I consider how Cyrus provided an alternative model for ruling, which brought freedom and not enslavement, and why this was significant for Greek political thinking generally and the theorising of the rule of one man in particular.

Herodotus and the rule by one man

Herodotus displays interest in the rule by one man, autocracy, and his account is full of kings, tyrants and monarchs of all races. For Herodotus' monarchy is not always a bad thing – he says that if the Thracians had united under one man or with a single purpose, they would have been unbeatable in battle and the strongest by far of all the races (5.3.1). However, it is generally assumed in Herodotus that rule by one man was a barbarian tendency, which the non-Greek world struggled to avoid. The Medes elected Deioces as a king, for without one there was political and social chaos (1.97–98.1). The Egyptians, likewise, although they had won their freedom from kings, could not manage to organise themselves for long without them and so appointed 12 kings of the 12 Egyptian districts (2.147.2).

Further, it is often said that Herodotus thought monarchy was not a suitable constitutional form for Greeks, and that he was generally hostile to kings, and Asiatic monarchs in particular.[5] Munson, for example, argues for the centrality of the theme of monarchy in Herodotus, but, pointing to Otanes' speech in the Constitution Debate, sees it as a 'predominantly negative paradigm'.[6] As Munson and others have claimed, many rulers in Herodotus do conform to Otanes' hostile model of monarchy, especially the kings of Persia.[7] In many ways Cambyses frames the stereotype. In the first place, he transgressed the customary laws, and invented

others as he wanted. In order to marry his sister (which was unlawful), he had a new law made that the king could do whatever he wanted (placing the king effectively above the law) (3.31.1–5). He later married another of his sisters, whom he kicked to death when she was pregnant, because she dared to criticise him during a dinner conversation (3.31.6–32.4). He also committed sacrilege by burning the corpse of the pharaoh Amasis, an act which was contrary to the customs of both the Egyptians and the Persians (3.16), and by killing the Apis calf, which the Egyptians thought was the epiphanous manifestation of a god (3.27–9). He was ruthless, inconsistent and cruel in his dealing with advisors, especially Prexaspes (whose son he shot through the heart with an arrow to make a point about allegations of Cambyses' madness and Persian truth-telling: 3.34–5).

This tendency for Asiatic rulers to conform to a stereotype has led some commentators to claim that in Herodotus' writings, all Asiatic monarchs lack real individuality, and it is argued that this typecasting of monarchs and monarchy provides the framework that drives Herodotus' narrative.[8] Others have suggested that any individuality the Persian kings do appear to display in their characters is only a reflection of their locations within the general pattern of historical causality founded on Herodotus' principle that great cities become small and small great, and that human prosperity never stays in the same place for long (1.5.3–4).[9] The basis of this cyclical rule of history was the jealousy of the gods and divine punishment was meted out to those like Xerxes who grasped at too much, even if the divine will was compromised to a certain extent by Fate.[10] Even Cyrus finally overreached himself, and forgot the lessons of his predecessors. He attacked the Massagetae because he had begun to think that he was more than mortal (a dangerous and tyrannical thought),[11] and that Fortune (*eutuchia*) was on his side (1.204.2; cf. 1.86.6).

Cyrus, because of his experience, does not escape the vicissitudes of the historical cycle. Yet he is different from other Persian kings in a way that is completely independent of Herodotus' normalising patterns and types. In fact, Herodotus is at pains to point out that the Persians themselves made distinctions between the rule of their kings: Darius, they said, was like a tradesman, Cambyses a master (a *despotēs*) and Cyrus a father, who was gentle and contrived every good thing for his people (3.89.3). Herodotus was interested not only in the relationship of monarchs to the larger impersonal cycles of history, but also in the variety of rulers and both the moralities and immoralities of the ways in which they ruled.[12] Even Cambyses rises above his madness and the stereotype to become a noble, even pitiable, figure as he faces death (3.65–6).[13] Cyrus is also an individual. He too can act cruelly, and perhaps even 'barbarically' (he cut off Smerdis' ears – who was to become the pretender to the throne on Cambyses' death – as punishment for a crime: 3.69.5),[14] but unlike the other enslaving kings of Persia, Cyrus brought freedom.[15]

Freedom: Eleutheria

In the fifth century, 'freedom' had become a defining slogan which formed a central pillar of Greek self-definition. From the archaic period, freedom and slavery had been inextricably and diametrically linked in Greek thought, and freedom was defined as the quality of not being enslaved.[16] It was freedom and deliverance from slavery that the Greeks thought they had achieved as a result of the Persian defeat in the wars.[17] While the idea that monarchy brought slavery had already found expression in Athens as early as the sixth century (Solon fr. 9 West *IE*²),[18] it was as a result of the Persian Wars that the Persian king became the prime example of the enslaving monarch, just as it also became a literary *topos* that the peoples of Asia were enslaved (for example, Aeschylus, *Persians* 176–97; *Airs, Waters, Places* 23, cf. 16). Indeed, slavery to the king could also be a very real and personal experience. After the battle of Thermopylae the Thebans, who surrendered to Xerxes, were branded with the 'king's marks' (*stigmata basilēia*) (7.233.2).[19]

It is not surprising then that just as he was interested in rulers and ruling, so Herodotus was also preoccupied by freedom: the conditions in which freedom was won; those in which it was lost; and what freedom really meant. For Herodotus, the war against Persia was first and foremost a war of liberation (7.178.1). Freedom was achieved for Greece by the Athenians (7.139.5), who Herodotus says always sought after it (8.143.1), and who had always had a reputation as liberators (8.142.3). He also defines freedom in the first instance, negatively, as freedom from slavery. Slavery, on the other hand, was subjection to the will of another (cf. 7.102.2), constraint (by fear or beatings) and a lack of independent purpose (cf. 7.38–9, 103.4), and it was characterised by a life of toil as opposed to a life of ease (1.126) – although, ironically, the easy life itself could lead to slavery, and freedom could be achieved through hard work and resistance to the temptations of softness and lack of discipline (6.11–12).

The quality of freedom was enhanced by its relationship to slavery, which for Herodotus could be a matter of choice. The Samian tyrant, Maeandrius, offered to give the community of the Samians their freedom (3.142.4), though the Samians, Herodotus says, chose not to be free (3.143.2). The Ionian tyrants, likewise, when they could have taken their personal freedom with the help of the other tyrants and won the freedom of Ionia by leaving Darius stranded in Scythia (4.133.2, 137.2), chose instead to keep the bridge for the king so that he could return to Asia. In this way they expected to retain his support for their regimes, since they knew the king guaranteed their personal power (4.137.2–3). They may have had some localised power, but power alone did not make them free. In fact, the Scythians condemned the Ionians for wanting to be 'household slaves' (*andrapodes*) and for being 'master-loving' (*philodespotai*) – for one could (and should) try to be free. Even those who enslaved others recognised the importance of striving for freedom.

The Egyptian Sesotris, in his campaign in Egypt, condemned as effeminate those whom he attacked who did not resist for the sake of their freedom (2.102).

Furthermore, the fight for freedom was of heroic proportions. When the Medes won their freedom from the Assyrians, Herodotus says that from slaves they became free and *andres agathoi*, men of excellence (1.95.2), although they later chose to adopt another kind of slavery when they elected Deioces as king. In the face of the Persian attack, some of the Ionians abandoned their homes rather than succumb to slavery (*doulosunē*), while others stayed and, as *andres agathoi*, fought Harpagus the Persian commander (1.169.1). The Perinthians were also *andres agathoi* in pursuit of their freedom, although they failed to retain it under pressure from the Persians (5.2.1). When the Cypriots joined the Ionians in their revolt from the Persian king in 499, the Ionians declined to help the Cyrpiots but urged them to be *agathoi* (5.109.3). Onesilus, the rebel leader of the Cypriot city of Amathous, who in the cause of Cypriot freedom laid siege to his own city, was finally honoured as a hero on the instruction of an oracle for his part in the fight for freedom. The Amathousians had originally impaled his head on a spike above the city gates (5.114–15).[20]

However, as well as working within this traditional analysis of freedom (as 'freedom from slavery'), Herodotus also developed the notion in positive directions, so that it also became a condition of political strength. The Athenian Miltiades told Callimachus, the polemarch who had the casting vote on whether the Athenians should resist the Persians at Marathon, that it was his choice whether he made the city free and the first city in Greece (and whether he would be remembered for a deed as great as that of the tyrannicides) (6.109.3–6).[21] It was freedom, Herodotus says, that made Athens strong (5.66.1, 6.109.6). When the Athenians were ruled by tyrants they were no better than their enemies, but once they were free they became the first city by far (5.78).

Ironically, perhaps, the political strength of the community began at the level of the individual. 'For it is clear,' says Herodotus (5.78), 'that when [the Athenians] were subdued they were lazy like those working for a master, but when they were free each man was keen to work in his own interests.' A quality of this freedom was the ability to speak freely. At Athens, *isegoria*, equality of speech, was the expression of freedom (5.78; cf. Aeschylus, *Persians* 591–4; Euripides, *Suppliants* 438–41). Sosicles, the Corinthian, also speaks 'freely' against tyranny when he denounced the Spartan plan to restore tyrants at Athens, and in this way he gave a voice to the concerns of all the allies, though before they had remained silent (5.93.2).[22]

In fact, civic strength arose when individual freedoms were deployed for the community. Xerxes asked the Spartan Demaratus before the battle of Thermopylae how any group of people could achieve anything if they could do whatever they wanted (7.103.4). Demaratus replied that the Spartans were free, but not entirely free, because *nomos* was their master (*despotēs*), 'whom they fear more than your

subjects fear you' (7.104.4). *Nomos*, which encompassed law and custom,[23] was simultaneously an expression of the community and also both a cause of and a limitation on individual actions,[24] ensuring, as it expressed, community cohesiveness. Herodotus was aware that all communities had their own *nomoi* (3.38), and that everyone thinks their own *nomoi* are best. Yet the relationship between the rule of the *nomoi* and the rule of one man was inherently problematic, and raised the question of who ultimately ruled – law or the monarch.[25] Deioces, as the elected king (*basileus*), delivered the Medes from the chaos and injustice of *anomia* ('lawlessness') and brought 'good order' (*eunomesthai*). However, he was a man who had loved the idea of being tyrant (1.96.1), and was harsh (*chalepos*) and absolute in his guardianship of justice (1.1001). Darius, in the Constitution Debate, tries to square the circle by arguing that the rule by one man was their ancestral custom (*patrioi nomoi*) (3.82.5). Yet Otanes (when Darius wins the debate) refuses to rule or be ruled, since he wishes for himself and his family to remain free (on the understanding that they would not transgress the established *nomoi*), which immediately problematises Darius' claims (3.83.2–3).

That Darius looked back to the freedom of Cyrus is significant, but, as Otanes shows, the rule of Cyrus was no longer something that the Persians could realise: in the world of the Constitution Debate the ancestral *nomoi*, as represented by the rule of one man, could not provide freedom.[26] In large part this was because of the recklessness and wantonness of Cambyses, who changed the relation between king and law. When Cambyses instructed the judges to find a law that would allow him to marry his sister, fearing for their lives, they discovered another that would allow them not to break customary law (*nomos*) (3.31.5). Cambyses irrevocably changed the balance between the monarch and law, creating a paradox so that while Darius wanted to preserve the ancestral *nomoi* through rule by one man, Otanes warns in the Constitution Debate that a monarch would overturn them (3.80.5). The arbitrariness of rule by a man who decided what law was (so that he was law – a law that was unpredictable and unrestrainable) produced the conditions of slavery and an absence of freedom.

Cyrus and freedom

Most commentators do not distinguish Cyrus from other Asian monarchs, but see him as part of the model of tyrannical oriental kingship. Yet, in stark contrast to the Persian kings who enslave, Herodotus' Cyrus brings political freedom.[27] In order to consider fully the significance of this phenomenon, we need to outline Herodotus' account of Cyrus' birth, childhood and growth to manhood (1.106–30).

As Herodotus chooses to tell the story (and he knows there are different versions: 1.95.1), Cyrus was the grandson of Astyages, the king of the Medes, who on account of a dream gave his daughter in marriage to the Persian Cambyses

(the Persians were at this time subject to the Medes). Because of another dream that the child of Mandane (Astyages' daughter) would rule the whole of Asia, Astyages arranged for the child to be exposed at birth. However, Harpagus, who had been given the job, did not want the responsibility for the baby's death, so gave the newborn to a shepherd to expose. The shepherd's wife had given birth on the same day to a still-born baby, so the shepherd and his wife switched the children. As a result, Cyrus was brought up by the shepherd of Astyages and his wife.

However, one day when Cyrus was ten years old, he was playing 'kings' with the village children. Cyrus had been elected 'king' by the others, since, Herodotus says, he seemed the 'most fitting' (*epitēdeiotatos*) for the position. One of the children, the son of a Persian noble, refused to take orders from Cyrus as he organised his 'royal court', and so Cyrus beat him. Cyrus was then brought before Astyages and forced to defend himself, which he did robustly. At this point Astyages recognised the character of the child's face and noticed that Cyrus' answer was 'very free' (*eleutheriōtatē*). As a result, Astyages realised that Cyrus could not be the son of the shepherd, and must be his own grandson. All was revealed, and Cyrus was restored to his natural parents. Harpagus was punished by being served his own son for dinner.

Herodotus says that Cyrus grew up to be the bravest and the most loved of the Persians. Harpagus, who was looking for revenge, persuaded Cyrus to lead the Persians in revolt. Cyrus in turn convinced the Persians by offering them two choices: a life of hard work and 'slavish' (*douloprepēs*) labour; or a life of luxury and ease. Cyrus said that he was divinely ordained to lead them, and if they followed him they would be free (*eleutheroi*). The Persians, who welcomed the chance of freedom, rose against Astyages and defeated him in battle. So, Herodotus has Astyages repine, the Medes were slaves who had been masters, and the Persians were masters who had formerly been slaves.

This story contains not only obvious folkloric but also ironic elements – for example, Cyrus later warns the Persians that a soft life makes soft men who do not rule but are ruled (9.122.3).[28] But the main point is clear. Cyrus as a child has the qualities of a free man, and also of a king. Cyrus exemplified freedom in his person: even as a child he acted in a 'kingly' way and demonstrated his natural facility for speaking freely. As a result, Cyrus shows that freedom is not just an absence of slavery but also a positive quality, which is natural and inherited, but needs to be proved by actions and argument.

As a man who is naturally free, Cyrus brings freedom to the Persians who, desiring freedom, become masters through empire. That ruling others should bring freedom is in some ways unexpected (although Bias of Priene had suggested, under threat of Cyrus' conquering army, that the Ionians should move to Sardinia, where they could become prosperous and rule others: 1.170.2). Freedom then

not only gave one the strength to resist enslavement, but also to have empire (and to enslave others). An essential part of this freedom was the ability to organise others – a quality which Cyrus demonstrated as a child, and which the other children recognised as making him the most fit to rule them. Just as the freedom of the Spartans was freedom with edge (which made them free but not wholly free), so also Cyrus' freedom brings with it the hard edge of empire.

When Cyrus ruled the Persians he made them free not only in so far as they ruled others, but also because he brought them individual freedom. This is the implication of Darius' defence of monarchy in the Constitution Debate, which was concerned with how rule should be conducted at a local level, and is not interested in empire. Here Darius argues on the basis of Cyrus' example that monarchy alone brings civic freedom. Otanes' refusal to rule or be ruled reveals the problem with Darius' claim for monarchy in general, but also suggests how Cyrus' monarchy may have indeed brought freedom. Herodotus says Otanes maintained his freedom by agreeing that while he would only be ruled by a king as much as he chose to be, this was on the condition that he did not transgress the *nomoi* of the Persians. Thus it is clear that Otanes' freedom inhered in obeying the laws, and was guaranteed by the protection of the laws.[29] So a ruler, such as Cyrus, could provide civic freedom if (as at Sparta) the community was directed by *nomos* rather than the ruler's whim. The irony was that the personal freedom of the kings of Persia (as Cyrus naturally displayed, and as Cambyses expressed) led Cambyses and his successors away from the good of the community, and towards their own self-interest and the desire to do whatever they wanted, and so to their subjects' enslavement.[30]

The Persians, Herodotus says, called Cyrus father and benefactor (3.160.2). Although as a conqueror he was severe towards those who resisted him (for example, 1.141), he stood in contrast both to Deioces and Astyages, who Herodotus says ruled harshly (1.100.1, 123.2). Cyrus was gentle (*ēpios*) and treated his people well. He also understood that Croesus too stood as a father to the Lydians (1.155.1). There is a strong sense of a positive and familial relationship between Cyrus and those he ruled.[31] Despite his own 'freedom', Cyrus served his community and so brought a very 'Greek' kind of freedom to the Persians. It was a freedom at an individual and communal level, and was expressed through robust argument. Herodotus does not explicitly connect Cyrus with rule through *nomoi*, though he is clear that Persians have *nomoi*, one of which is that not even the king can have someone put to death for a single offence (1.137) – despite the numerous examples of Cambyses and Xerxes having people killed for no good reason at all. Yet Cyrus' respect for *nomoi* is implicit in the language of relationship, orderliness and stability with which he rules. Cyrus demonstrated that monarchy, even Persian monarchy, could bring freedom, and did not have to mean enslavement or the overturning of the laws.

Cyrus, freedom and Greek political thought

It is often assumed that by the fifth century, the Greek world was no longer really interested in kings, at least at a practical level. Paul Cartledge has claimed, recently, that, although

> [m]onarchy runs like a red thread through Greek political history and thought […] [i]t was never normal or normative […] The concentration of power that full-blooded monarchy represented was always at bottom felt to be incompatible with the fundamental *polis* principles of freedom and equality.[32]

Cartledge assumes that the end to which the Greek *polis* was working, and its great achievement, in which equality and freedom were realised, was democracy. That monarchy was largely irrelevant to fifth-century Greeks seems to be confirmed by some ancient authorities. Thucydides says that ancestral kingship (*patrikai basileiai*) was a thing of the past (1.13.1). Aristotle in the fourth century also says that 'kings according to law' (*basileia*) did not exist in his own time, since wherever rule by one man existed, it was rule of the unwilling, and those who ruled were not distinguished enough to be worthy of the position (*Politics* 5.1313a3–8). However, Aristotle also did not think that individual rule could be justified, not least because in a *polis* he thinks citizenship should reside in ruling and being ruled in turn. For this reason, citizens should be roughly equal, with no man lording it over the others (for example, *Politics* 1.1255b16–20, 1259b4–6, 3.1279a8–13, 4.1295b25–6).

As we have seen, however, Herodotus is fascinated by monarchs. Pelling has argued that the Constitution Debate itself is not so much about the three constitutions it purports to consider (monarchy, oligarchy and democracy), but about a particular version of one – tyranny, which is generally regarded in Greek political thought as the negative version of the monarchy.[33] The question needs to be asked then why Herodotus, or his Greek audience, would be interested in monarchy at all – especially if it was as far from the tenor and thrust of mainstream Greek politics as has sometimes been suggested. In this final section we will consider the reasons why Herodotus wanted to explore the issue of the relationship between monarchy and freedom, and why he chose Cyrus to do it.

The first – and simple – answer is the connection Herodotus makes between Cyrus and empire. While not all agree that Herodotus is interested in the politics of his own time, it is often argued that through the stories of the rise and fall of Oriental monarchs, Herodotus is making an oblique allusion to the *polis tyrannos*. In particular, he is 'warning' the Athenians about their imperial ambitions, and what happens to those who grasp at too much.[34] However, as we have seen, Herodotus does not seem averse to imperial ambition as such. On the contrary,

he seems to suggest that ambition is a necessary and positive result of political strength. He does show the consequences for those who forget the lesson that, since the gods are jealous, a man cannot count himself happy until he is dead. Yet it was not empire that was wrong, but an attitude to empire that took it for granted. Even Cyrus, who saved Croesus from the pyre because he realised that he himself was mortal, that life was unstable and that divine retribution was always possible (1.86.6), ultimately forgot these things. Nevertheless, freedom and empire were not inconsistent. In fact, they were interdependent, and one was the best condition in which the other could be achieved.

Furthermore, in Greece in the fifth century, apart from the agonistic desire to rule (cf. 7.8α.2), it was a live issue whether one should pursue empire and rule others as a safeguard against being ruled (that is, rule or be ruled).[35] Athens' defence of empire (at least as represented by Thucydides) rested on these grounds (cf. Thucydides 1.75.3, 76.2), as did his treatment of states who lay outside the empire. In 416/15 BC, Thucydides has the Athenians defend the enslavement of the Melians on the basis that leaving them independent would endanger Athens' security (5.97). The same justifications were used for the campaign against the Syracusans later that year (for example, Thucydides 5.18.1–3, 6.18.3, 83.2). While Thucydides questions the morality of this position, Herodotus accepts it and promotes empire as a position of strength, even if he warns of the dangers as well.

Another answer to our question is that Greek constitutional thought was built on the dual relationship of the ruler and the ruled. Aristotle thinks that in any orderly community, it was natural that some should rule and others be ruled (*Politics* 1.1254a28–33),[36] even though, as we have seen, he also maintains that in a city of equals, this should mean that citizens rule and are ruled in turn. The notion of ruling and being ruled seems to have been formulated for the first time in the mid-fifth century (cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 666–9), and then it is posed as the relation of a king to ruling. The suggestion seems to be, though it is not explicit, that the king should be ruled by the *nomoi* of the city. Certainly, that a king should be ruled by law is spelled out clearly in the fourth century.[37] Xenophon, for example, says that Agesilaus abjured ruling absolutely (where the comparison is clearly with the Persian king) and chose to rule according to law instead (*Agesilaus* 2.16), and Xenophon's ironic treatment of Cyrus in the *Cyropaedia* suggests that this is what this king should have done as well. That ruling and being ruled is explored at the simplest level of ruler and ruled is not at all surprising, in either Herodotus or Xenophon. We have already seen the same phenomenon at work in understanding the role of the *polis* as head of an empire. Aristophanes also imagines 'the people' in fifth-century democratic Athens as a king (*basileus*) of all the Greeks (*Knights* 1333; cf. 10887–9).[38] Rulers, kings and tyrants could become important metaphors for thinking about the problems and issues of Greek political theorising.

As well as the tyrant as metaphor for the *polis*, Herodotus is interested in monarchy for its own sake. Despite Cartledge's scepticism, rule by one man was the red thread that ran through Greek political practice. A number of the old dynastic houses may have died out,[39] but some persisted (at Sparta, in Macedon and among the Molossians, for example). New dynasties were established throughout the archaic and classical periods (in Corinth, Cyrene, Sicily and Cyprus, and even Athens), even if they tended to be short-lived and relatively unstable. In fact, monarchy was as much part of the rich texture of Greek politics as oligarchy or democracy. In the context of the competitive politics of the Greek cities, monarchy was always the possible threat and the possible resolution to problems. To this extent, Darius' comments about the inevitability of monarchy fit the Greek political world very neatly. Further, the Persian monarchy, despite its problems and the infelicities of some its incumbents, provided a relatively durable and stable framework within which monarchy, in all its variations, could be analysed and assessed.

Through Cyrus, Herodotus can also present a positive, and individuated, image of monarchy and ruling.[40] As we have seen, it is generally assumed that Herodotus thinks of monarchy as an 'Eastern' phenomenon, while the Greek 'West' is the land of 'free' constitutions. (However, Herodotus presents as a 'wonder' the Persian establishment of democracies in Asia Minor (6.43.3), and suggests in the context of the lead-up to the Ionian revolt that it was easier to deceive the many at Athens than one man at Sparta (5.97.2).) That Cyrus demonstrated his 'kingly' nature as a child – showing that one could be born with the qualities for ruling – is important.[41] Some people may be born to rule (and do it badly), but there are also those who are rulers by nature.[42]

The historian is also prepared (both innovatively and shockingly) to make a Persian king (and even the 'first' Persian king, who was a culture-hero for the Persians) the flag-bearer for the very Greek principle of freedom. This might well jar Hellenic sensibilities, but it is part of the point, and the interest in allowing Cyrus to play out this particular part, that he opens up the possibility that there could be other monarchs (even Greek monarchs) who could deliver freedom as well. Freedom was central to democratic ideology, but intellectuals in Athens in the second half of the fifth century were becoming increasingly disillusioned with democracy and interested in other constitutional forms. Raaflaub has argued that in the fourth century at Athens, the idea of the 'truly free' (that is, those who were not just legally free, but also free to pursue an education) emerged as part of an oligarchic programme.[43] It is equally striking that Herodotus' Spartans are free (and yet regulated) because of their commitment to *nomos*, law.[44] For Herodotus, it is *nomos* (in Athenian democracy, Spartan oligarchy or Cyrus' monarchy) that is king of all (3.38.4). Democracy may have claimed freedom as its own, but that did not mean that other constitutional forms could not deliver freedoms as well.[45]

Even then, however, Cyrus does not only represent the unsettling consequences of Self in Other and Other in Self.[46] Pelling in particular has argued that, although Herodotus may have created a framework for his account of the Persian Wars through the traditional antipathy between Europe and Asia, Persia (or Asia) in Herodotus was not just an Other against which Greeks and Greek culture could be defined.[47] In fact, Flower notes that the truth-loving Persians of Herodotus are sometimes more noble than the Greeks.[48] Although the fact of its occurrence is one of the 'wonders' that Herodotus promised in his Preface,[49] it is the Persians who conduct the debate on constitutions (which Herodotus insists *was* a Persian debate: 3.80.1, 6.43.3). Thompson brings out in vivid relief the ways in which this *is* a Persian debate, even though within a *Greek* framework, which uncovers Persian mentalities.[50] It is also important that Persians adopt *nomoi* from others (1.135), since this adaptability provides for the possibility of learning and developing – not just for Persians, but for others. *Nomoi* are best for cultures that create them, but the best *nomoi* can also be shared between different peoples. Cyrus had already been imported into the Greek literary tradition as an idealised ruler, even if this was the result of his own propaganda, and so provided a well-established ideal of the 'good king' for Greeks as well as the Persians, even if the idealised king was also a complicated one in Herodotus' hands.[51] Yet Cyrus is not just a Persian wrapped up in Greek values. The fact that he does ultimately fail, and so conforms to the stereotype, makes this point.

Herodotus was interested in monarchy in all its forms. There were many examples of kings, and especially Asian kings, who ruled harshly and tyrannically by doing as they pleased, in disregard of the established *nomoi*, enervating their subjects by taking away their will to act, and so making them slaves. Cyrus, a Persian king with his own Greek resonances, provided the paradigm for another kind of ruler, who offered freedom instead of slavery, took care of his people as a father, represented in his person freedom of action and speech, and gave a freedom that brought with it political strength and empire. At the same time, for Herodotus' Greek audience, it is the 'wonder' of a Persian, who not only brought but also represented freedom, which was Cyrus' appeal. Furthermore, although in Herodotus' thought Persian and Greek enmity was inevitable and implacable, the relationship between Persians and Greeks was a complicated one. Just as the Persians could stage a 'Greek-style' debate about Persians, so the Greeks could learn about freedom from the greatest of the Persians, Cyrus, and the lessons he had to give about ruling were not only for Persians, but for all men.

Notes

1. The date of Herodotus' writing is variously given in the period between the 440s and as late as the 390s, although most opt for a date in the second half of the

420s. 430–24 BC: W.W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1912), 1.9; between 426 and 415 BC: J. L. Moles, 'Herodotus "warns" the Athenians', *Papers of the Leeds International Seminar Series*, 9 (1996), 259–84; 414 BC: C. W. Fornara, 'Evidence for the date of Herodotus' publication', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 91 (1971), 25–34; at least two dates of publication in 426 and 415: J. Wells, *Studies in Herodotus* (Oxford, 1923), 169–82; no single year of publication, but publication as a continuous process: J. A. S. Evans, *Herodotus* (Boston, 1982), 17–18. For pre-publication readings of Herodotus, see also J. Marincola, *Greek Historians. Greece and Rome*, New Surveys in the Classics no. 31 (Oxford, 2001), 23.

2. Herodotus also laughs at his predecessors who divided the world into two continents, or his predecessors who include Libya as a third continent (4.36.2; cf. 2.16.2, 4.42.1), but the old division of Europe and Asia remains central to the structure of his work and his thought: R. Thomas, *Herodotus in Context* (Cambridge, 2000), 75–101; for Europe and Asia more generally in Greek thought, note also L. Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the Barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Swansea, 2007), 19–31.
3. The Spartans had been unable to obtain good omens from their sacrifices on account of the murders, so Sperthias and Bulis had volunteered to go to Susa and die for their country. For the Persians, slavery was symbolised by the giving of earth and water (Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 23.1399b11–12), although the significance of these symbols is unclear; see A. Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire. A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period*, 2 vols (London, 2007), 1.199. Compare L. L. Orlin, 'Athens and Persia c. 507 BC', in L. L. Orlin (ed.), *Michigan Oriental Studies in Honor of G.G. Cameron* (Ann Arbor, 1976), 255–66; A. Kuhrt, 'Earth and water', in A. Kuhrt and H. Sancisis-Weerdenburg (eds), *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory. Proceedings of the London 1985 Achaemenid Workshop* (Leiden, 1988), 87–99; G. Nenci, '*La formula della richiesta della terra e dell'acqua nel lessico diplomatico achaemenide*', in M. Bertinelli and L. Piccirilli (eds), *Linguagio e terminologia diplomatica dall'antico oriente all'impero Byzantini* (Rome, 2001), 31–42.
4. On the Constitution Debate, the best recent analyses are: C. B. R. Pelling, 'Speech and action: Herodotus' debate on the constitutions', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 48 (2002), 123–58; D. Asheri, in D. Asheri, A. B. Lloyd and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV* (Oxford, 2007), 471–6.
5. D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1989), 171–80: 'For Herodotus, oriental kingship was equivalent to unlimited authority and power.'
6. R. V. Munson, *Telling Wonders. Ethnographic and Political Discourse in the Work of Herodotus* (Ann Arbor, 2001), 49–50.
7. Note especially D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1989), 172–9.
8. See especially C. Dewald, 'Form and content: The question of tyranny in Herodotus', in K. Morgan (ed.), *Popular Tyranny: Sovereignty and its Discontents in Ancient Greece* (Austin, 2003), 32–40; note also P. Georges, *Barbarian Asia and the Greek Experience. From the Archaic Period to the Age of Xenophon* (Baltimore and

London, 1994), 167–206; F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, tr. J. Lloyd (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), 322–39 (originally published as *Le Miroir d'Hérodote: Essai sur la Représentation de l'Autre* (Paris, 1980)).

9. H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland, 1966), 148–88, esp. 183: 'Cyrus the Founder, Cambyses and Xerxes the Successors, Croesus and Darius the Powerful Monarchs, are individual creations that are at the same time typical manifestations of royal power as such. Individual character is thus not the result of any accident of nature, but is strictly connected with typical situations. Croesus differs from Darius because the limited Lydian Empire is better exemplified in a moderate king; Xerxes differs from Cambyses because of his special position at the end of a long Persian development.'
10. Compare 1.91.1–2 on Croesus suffering before his time, not through the will of the god, but because of the intervention of Fate, *Moira*. On Fate in Herodotus, see esp. M.A. Flower and J. Marincola, *Herodotus,* Histories *Book IX* (Cambridge, 2002), 39–44.
11. The relationship of the Persian kings to the divine is a matter of debate. Briant (*Histoire de l'Empire Perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Paris, 1996), 252–3) asserts that while the Persian kings were not divine, they did stand in the space between the world of men and the world of gods. Kuhrt, however, goes further to suggest some 'mixing' of the mortal and the divine: *The Persian Empire. A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period*, 2 vols (London, 2007), 2.11.38 and fig. 11.45 with comment; see also B. Lincoln, 'The role of religion in Achaemenian imperialism', in N. Brisch (ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Chicago, 2008), 221–41, who hints at the possibility of divinity, even if he does not go this far. See now also M. C. Root, 'Defining the divine in Achaemenid Persian kingship: the view from Bisitun', in L. Mitchell and C. Melville (eds), *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies in Kings and Kingship of the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leiden, 2013), 23–65, who takes a more positive view of the divine aspects of the imagery of Persian kingship. In Greek thought, claims of divinity could be associated with tyranny and being above the law: B. Currie, *Pindar and the Cult of Heroes* (Oxford, 2005), 195.
12. J. S. Romm, *Herodotus* (New Haven and London, 1998), 158–70; S. Forsdyke, 'Herodotus, political history and political thought', in C. Dewald and J. Marincola (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge, 2006), 23–6; cf. D. Asheri, in D. Asheri, A. B. Lloyd and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV* (Oxford, 2007), 45–9.
13. J. S. Romm, *Herodotus* (New Haven and London, 1998), 162–3.
14. Impalement of the dead was thought by the Greeks to be 'barbaric': 9.78–9 (cf. 4.202.1 with 205), although crucifixion of the living seems to have been acceptable: 9.120.4.
15. Cambyses exhorts the Persians to maintain their freedom, which seems to mean only freedom from Medish control: 3.65.6–7. Cyrus' freedom, however, has positive aspects which Cambyses is unable to comprehend.
16. See K. A. Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*, tr. R. Franciscono (Chicago, 2004), 23–9 (rev. from *Die Enteckung der Freiheit: Zur historischen Semantik und Gesellschaftsgeschichte eines politischen Grundbegriffes der Griechen*

(Munich, 1985)); P. Cartledge, ' "Like a worm i' the bud"? A heterology of classical Greek slavery', *Greece and Rome*, 40 (1993), 163–80.

17. After the final victory at Plataea, the Spartan Pausanias, who was commander of the combined forces, made sacrifices to Zeus *Eleutherios* (Zeus of Freedom) in the marketplace at Plataea (Thucydides 2.71.2), and an altar was erected with an inscription that declared that it had been built by Greeks, common for a free Greece, as the altar of Zeus *Eleutherios* ((Simonides) XV Page *FGE*). A dedication was also made at Delphi saying: 'The saviours of Spacious Greece made this dedication,/having delivered the cities from hateful slavery' (Diodorus Siculus 11.33.2 = [Simonides] XVII (b) Page *FGE*).
18. 'From a cloud comes the force of snow or hail,/ and thunder is from bright lightning./ But by great men the city is destroyed,/ and the people unwittingly fall into the slavery of a monarch./ Raised too far, it is not easy to restrain them/ later, but then it is necessary to put a positive gloss on it.'
19. See A. Kuhrt, 'Earth and water', in A. Kuhrt and H. Sancisis-Weerdenburg (eds), *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory. Proceedings of the London 1985 Achaemenid Workshop* (Leiden, 1988), 93, 95–6.
20. On Onesilus and the Cypriots, see A. Serghidou, 'Cyprus and Onesilus: an interlude of freedom (5.104, 108–16)', in E. Irwin and E. Greenwood (eds), *Reading Herodotus. A Study in the* Logoi *of Book 5 of Herodotus*' Histories (Cambridge, 2007), 269–88.
21. Herodotus is being deliberately ironic here, since he has already explained that the so-called tyrant-slayers did not bring an end to tyranny at Athens; instead, Cleomenes and the Spartans achieved the ejection of the Peisistratidae as a result of a Delphic oracle (although the oracle also allegedly had been bribed by the Athenian Alcmaeonidae), 5.55–6, 62–5.
22. See J. L. Moles, 'Herodotus "warns" the Athenians', *Papers of the Leeds International Seminar Series*, 9 (1996), 259–84.
23. J. A. S. Evans, '*Despotes nomos*', *Athenaeum*, 43 (1965), 143–7; M. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings of the Athenian Democracy* (Oxford, 1969), 20–56.
24. J. A. S. Evans, '*Despotes nomos*', *Athenaeum*, 43 (1965), 149–52; M. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings of the Athenian Democracy* (Oxford, 1969), esp. 20–1: 'The thesis we will try to substantiate is that *nomos* in all its uses describes an order of some kind, which differs from other words for "order", such as *taxis*, in the connotation that this order is or ought to be regarded as valid and binding by those who live under it. In other words, *nomos* is a norm both in a descriptive and a prescriptive sense, and although the origin of this norm may on various occasion be attributed to gods, to a lawgiver, or to enactment by a society as a whole, the crucial point is that regardless of origin, it is recognised and acknowledged as the valid norm within a milieu.' Compare Malkin ('Networks and the emergence of Greek identity', in I. Malkin (ed.), *Mediterranean Paradigms and Classical Antiquity* (London and New York, 2005), 67–71) on the importance and significance of *nomima* in the foundation of colonies.
25. By the mid-fifth century, it was commonplace that a ruler should also be able to be ruled. In Sophocles' *Antigone* of the 440s, Creon, the ruler of Thebes, says that the city must obey whomever it appoints as ruler, but this man must also be prepared to

submit to good rule (666–9). The thought is repeated in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* of about the 360s in Cyrus' obedience to Cyaxares.

26. Cf. D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1989), 169–70.
27. That Herodotus' Cyrus brings political freedom is striking since the historical Cyrus' claims for his rule (as found on the *Cyrus Cylinder*, and probably also reflected at some level in Isaiah 44.28, 2 Chronicles 26.23 and Ezra 1) were based on religious tolerance: see M. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind. A History of Iran* (London, 2007), 11–17.
28. Compare the Lydians, whom Croesus persuaded Cyrus to ordain that they develop a lifestyle based on shop-keeping and ease. In this way, Croesus said, the Lydians would become women instead of men, and so would no longer pose a threat: 1.155.4. On women becoming men and men women, note also 8.88.3 (Xerxes on Artemisia).
29. See D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1989), 169: '*Nomos* would be [Otanes'] only shield, a weak one as he realized.'
30. The decline of the Persian royal house after Cyrus became a *topos*: Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.8; Plato, *Laws* 694a–696a.
31. Both Xenophon and Aristotle compare the good king to a father and to Agamemnon, shepherd of the people: Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.4.2, 4, 1.6.7–8, *Memorabilia* 3.2; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1161a10–15.
32. P. Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice* (Cambridge, 2009), 29.
33. C. B. R. Pelling, 'Speech and action: Herodotus' debate on the constitutions', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 48 (2002), 123–58.
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London, 1998), 52–5; D. Asheri, in D. Asheri, A. B. Lloyd and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV* (Oxford, 2007), 48.

35. S. Forsdyke, 'Herodotus, political history and political thought', in C. Dewald and J. Marincola (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge, 2006), 29–45.
36. On the 'principle of rulership': F. J. Miller Jnr, 'Naturalism', in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2005), 333–4. On ruling and being ruled in turn: M. Schofield, 'Aristotle: an introduction', in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2005), 318–20.
37. Both Plato and Aristotle ultimately reach this answer, though both toy with the idea of the philosopher-king (*Republic* 473c-e) and the *pambasileia*. Plato finally rejected the philosopher-king as a valid option because of man's essential nature (*Politicus* 301c-e, 302e; *Laws* 713c–14a; M. Schofield, *Plato. Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 2006), 161–73). Aristotle reaches a similar conclusion – that no man, however virtuous, could divorce himself from passion to the extent that he could rule as law: see esp. W. R. Newell, 'Superlative virtue: The problem of monarchy in Aristotle's *Politics*', in C. Lord and D. O'Connor (eds), *Essays on the Foundation of Aristotelian Political Science* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1991), 191–211.
38. On Aristophanes' king as an oriental monarch: L. Kallet, 'Accounting for culture in fifth-century Athens', in D. Boedeker and K. Raaflaub (eds), *Democracy, Empire and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 43–58.
39. Monarchs are attested at Argos at the beginning of the fifth century (even if with reduced powers), but seem to have disappeared by the 420s (and are not even attested as a magistracy): esp. P. Carlier, *La Royauté en Grèce avant Alexandre* (Paris, 1984), 381–2. If there was ever a hereditary monarchy at Athens during the archaic period, it had weakened to an annual magistracy by an early date: Carlier, *La Royauté*, 325–72.
40. Just as Otanes' defence of the rule of the multitude does not necessarily represent Herodotus' own view, the same is true for the Persian's condemnation of monarchy.
41. Compare Xenophon's treatment of Cyrus, whom Xenophon also described (however ironically) as a 'king by nature' (*Cyropaedia* 5.1.24–5).
42. Xenophon in the *Oeconomicus* says that while ruling can be learned, the best rulers – those that can command willing obedience – have a great natural, even divine, gift: 21.11–12.
43. K. A. Raaflaub, 'Democracy, oligarchy, and the concept of the "free citizen" in late fifth-century Athens', *Political Theory*, 11 (1983), 517–44.
44. Compare 1.65.2–66.1, where Lycurgus' legal reforms took Sparta from being the worst-ordered (*kakonomotatoi*) city in Greece to a state of good order and strength.
45. At this level, the Constitution Debate is only the beginning of a conversation with constitutional forms which Herodotus then amplifies and critiques throughout his work as a whole.
46. S. Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions. The Wonders of the New World*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1991), 127–8.

47. C. B. R. Pelling, 'East is East and West is West – or are they? National stereotypes in Herodotus', *Histos*, www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos. For a highly sophisticated reading of 'bridges' and 'bridging' in Herodotus, see E. Greenwood, 'Bridging the narrative (5.23–70)', in E. Irwin and E. Greenwood (eds), *Reading Herodotus. A Study in the* Logoi *of Book 5 of Herodotus'* Histories (Cambridge, 2007), 128–45.
48. M. A. Flower, 'Herodotus and Persia', in C. Dewald and J. Marincola (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge, 2006), 286–7.
49. D. Asheri, in D. Asheri, A. B. Lloyd and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV* (Oxford, 2007), 471–3.
50. N. Thompson, *Herodotus and the Origins of the Political Community: Arion's Leap* (New Haven and London, 1996), 52–78.
51. Aeschylus, in the *Persians* produced in 472 BC, had described Cyrus as 'fortunate' and 'kindly' (768–72), in contrast to Xerxes, who is undoubtedly an 'enslaving' king (see esp. 181–99). On the treatment of Darius in the play, compare O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus. The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1977), 126 (who argues that 'Aeschylus makes the contrast between Darius and Xerxes very striking'), and T. Harrison, *The Emptiness of Asia. Aeschylus' Persians and the History of the Fifth Century* (London, 2000), 83–91 (who argues for the continuity of characterisation of Darius and Xerxes in the play). Later, Antisthenes (*c.*445–*c.*365 BC) also used Cyrus as an exemplum (Dio Chrysostom 5.109; Diogenes Laertius 6.2): see D. L. Gera, *Xenophon's* Cyropaedia*: Style, Genre and Literary Technique* (Oxford, 1993), 8–10. Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia* also presents Cyrus as a ruler who brings freedom rather than slavery (although Xenophon modifies the definition of freedom to align it with willing obedience – so that rule of the willing is rule of the free). Plato, who is probably reacting against Xenophon (D. L. Gera, *Xenophon's* Cyropaedia: *Style, Genre and Literary Technique* (Oxford, 1993), 12–13), challenges the framework by presenting Cyrus as a king who brings a mix of slavery and freedom (*Laws* 694a).

8

Iran and the Aryan myth*

David Motadel

Few terms in modern history have developed a similar vigour and significance as the word 'Aryan'. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the term became a strong political concept which had a notable impact on the construction of ethnic and national identities in both the European and the non-European world. This chapter presents an account of the origins, evolution and politicisation of the term 'Aryan' in modern Europe, concluding with a brief sketch of its significance in the non-European world, specifically in Iran, since the late nineteenth century. The purpose of the article is to rethink the often underestimated role that Iran played in the history of myths about the 'Aryan', both in European debates and in Iranian nationalist discourse.[1]

The history of the term 'Aryan' can be seen as a series of conceptualisations and re-conceptualisations. This chapter endeavours to draw attention to the actual change and variation in the meaning of the expression over time,[2] exploring the rediscovery of the ancient term by European scholars of the late eighteenth century, its introduction into historical literature and linguistics in the early nineteenth century, and the subsequent conceptualising of 'Aryans' as an Indo-European people (I); the re-conceptualising of 'Aryans' as an Indo-European race (II); the evolution and abstraction of the term 'Aryan' within European race theories, and its politicisation and popularisation in the late nineteenth century (III); and the political instrumentalisation, particularly discourses about the 'Aryan' in Nazi Germany (IV).

I conclude with an examination of the reception of European ideas about the 'Aryan' in the non-European world, specifically its reception by Iranian nationalists (V). The century-long terminological evolution of the term did result in a diversification of meaning. The following narrative should therefore not be read as a history of a linear development, or even of teleological progress, but as an accumulation of competing, though linked, meanings.

I. Origins

Two thousand five hundred years before the term 'Aryan' became popular among racists and nationalists across Europe and Asia, the Persian king Darius I (522–486 BC) introduced himself in the rock inscription of Naqsh-i Rustam as follows:

> I (am) Darius the great king, king of kings, king of countries possessing all kinds of people, king of this great earth far and wide, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid, a Persian, the son of a Persian, an Aryan, of Aryan lineage.[3]

The term 'Aryan', as used by Darius, was a self-designation that described belonging to a people, and conveyed an ethnical connotation. 'Aryan' and related expressions like 'Arya' also appeared in other ancient Persian and Indian inscriptions and texts, most importantly in the Zoroastrian *Avesta* and in Vedic texts.[4]

The modern history of the term 'Aryan' begins with two very different 'discoveries' during the Age of Enlightment. The first was the rediscovery of the ancient term 'Aryan' by European scholars. In the eighteenth century, when European explorers developed a rising interest in Iran and ancient Persia, they soon found out that the ancient Persians had identified themselves as 'Aryans'. In 1768, before the inscription of Naqsh-i Rustam was decoded, the French Orientalist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron concluded from the writings of Herodotus and Diodor that 'Aryan' was the ancient name for the ancient 'peoples of Iran'.[5] Once introduced by Perron, the expression spread rapidly among European scholars. In Germany, for instance, the term 'Aryan' appeared for the first time in Johann Friedrich Kleuker's translation of Perron's article from French into German in 1777.[6]

The second discovery was philological, and concerned the exploration of the Indo-European linguistic connection. As the expansion of the European empires proceeded, Europeans became attentive to the relationship between European, Persian and Indian words. In 1786, Sir William Jones, an English judge on the Supreme Court in Calcutta and one of the founders of comparative philology, pronounced in his address to the 'Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal' that there was a strong affinity between Sanskrit 'both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar', and Greek and Latin.[7] The similarities were too close to 'possibly have been produced by accident'; they must have 'sprung from some common source, which perhaps, no longer exists', he concluded. He also considered that Gothic, Celtic and Old Persian belonged 'to the family'; 30 years later, in 1816, the German linguist Franz Bopp provided scientific proof of the structural affinity between Greco-Latin, Sanskrit and Persian.[8]

The expression 'Aryan', which had so far been seen as a name for the ancient Persian people, underwent its first extension of meaning in the era of romantic and volkish thought. Early national thinkers, most prominently Germans like Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, began to imagine the nation, a people, or in their words a Volk as an organic cultural community, rooted in its history and connected by shared folklore, myths, poetry, fairytales and, most importantly, by a common language.[9] Linguistic relationships were taken as natural proof of volkish or tribal relationships (still a mainly cultural notion) and the question about the ancestry and origins of a Volk became closely connected to speculations about the origins of its language.

In this context, the linguistic 'Indo-European' relationship was soon taken as proof of the tribal and volkish kinship of the people who spoke that language. As a consequence, European scholars began to see the ancient Persians as their ancestors. It was the German philosopher Friedrich Schlegel who performed the crucial step. Drawing from a linguistic to a tribal relationship, he suggested in 1808 that the ancestors of the Germans were the ancient Persian 'Aryans'. 'The name of the Aryans is related to another relationship, which concerns us much more intimately,' he proclaimed, adding that 'our Germanic ancestors, while they were still in Asia, were known foremost under the name "Aryans".' 'All of a sudden,' Schlegel triumphantly asserted, 'the old saga and opinion of the kinship of the Germans, or the Germanic and Gothic people with the Persians appear in a completely new light.'[10] The German thinker took the term 'Aryan', as reintroduced by Perron, to designate an ancient Indo-European 'primordial people' (*Urvolk*), which travelled in an ancient 'Aryan migration' from Asia to Europe.[11] By drawing from language to volkish origin, Europeans became 'Aryans', whose roots (*Urheimat*) lay in the East. This 'Aryan' migration theory, or 'Aryan myth', as Leon Poliakov put it, quickly became popular across Western Europe. Scholars began to see the ancient Persians as their ancestors. In October 1827, for instance, a certain L. C. Beaufort gave a paper to the Royal Irish Academy in which he suggested that many Irish customs were of Eastern, 'chiefly of Persian' origin.[12] 'Persia', he explained, was the country 'from which the Irish claim to derive in great measure their descent, their arts, and their religion'.[13]

Schlegel, and early proponents of the Aryan legend like Beaufort, referred to the cultural rather than biological conception of 'Aryans'. They defined a people still completely in accordance with Herder and other early national thinkers. Moreover, their conceptions of 'Aryans' and 'non-Aryans' were relatively neutral. Soon, however, scholars would define the relationship and the idea of an ancient 'Aryan' migration in biological and racial terms, and add specific character traits to the picture.

II. Racial thought

Over the course of the nineteenth century, cultural definitions of a people, Volk or nation became increasingly biologically and racially charged.[14] Race theories, as had been developed since the eighteenth century, received a cultural extension, while cultural ideas of a nation or a Volk obtained a biological one. Accordingly, many scholars no longer saw a linguistic relationship as a characteristic of a purely historical-cultural relationship, but rather a biological-racial one; indeed, linguists began to employ their theories to prove racial relationships, with linguistic characteristics increasingly being used as markers of racial classification. In this context, 'Aryans', widely believed to be an ancient primordial people and ancestors to the Europeans, were increasingly described in terms of physical appearance and associated with ideas of 'race'. As early as 1823, the German orientalist Julius Klaproth claimed that the ancient 'Aryans', or 'Indo-Germanics' as he named them, had been light-skinned, while in 1836, the French philologist Frédéric-Gustave Eichhoff declared that all Europeans once 'came from the Orient', as proven by the 'evidence of both physiology and linguistics'.[15]

More importantly, concepts of the 'Aryan' were increasingly charged with specific character traits that were considered racially inherent and linked to the notion of racial superiority. Already in 1830, Schlegel's student Christian Lassen, an Orientalist at the University of Bonn, remarked that the 'Indians and the Old Persian people called themselves with the same name, specifically "Aryans"; the honorific meaning undoubtedly suits also the militant Germans'.[16] He further substantiated this judgment in his famous *Indische Altertumskunde*, in which he glorified the 'Aryans' as 'the most gifted' of all and 'perfect in talent', and praised their creativity, flawless spirit and harmony of soul.[17] Lassen contrasted his descriptions with those of the 'Semites', laying the roots for the fatal idea of a dichotomy between 'Semites' and 'Aryans'. Referring to Jews and Arabs in particular, he wrote:

> History teaches us that the Semites did not possess the harmonious balance of all those forces of the spirit [*Gleichmass aller Seelenkräfte*] which characterised the Indo-Germans […] Their views and notions so absorb their intelligence that they are unable to rise with serenity to the contemplation of pure ideas […] In his religion the Semite is egoistical and exclusive.[18]

Besides attaching to the 'Aryan' all kinds of superior features, Lassen extended the meaning of the word in a second direction when suggesting to call the common family of languages 'Aryan' (instead of 'Indo-Germanic', for instance) as well.[19]

In fact, both the biological extension of the term 'Aryan' and its implicit valuation as a superior race spread rapidly among race theorists. Friedrich Max

Müller, Ernest Renan, Adolphe Pictet and Arthur Comte de Gobineau are among the best-known thinkers who in the nineteenth century popularised the idea of an ancient 'Aryan' master race which immigrated to Europe.

Friedrich Max Müller, a lecturer at Oxford and the most notable propagandist of the Aryan legend in England, declared that linguistics, was the science to justify the existence and origins of an 'Aryan' race.[20] Through the discovery of relationship between languages, he proclaimed 'a complete revolution took place in the views commonly entertained of the ancient history of the world'.[21] The ancestors of the 'Aryan' race, 'whose thought still runs in our thoughts, as their blood may run in our veins', had come from Asia – they would be 'our true ancestors in spirit and in truth'.[22]

Müller's French counterpart Ernest Renan distinguished first and foremost 'Aryans' from 'Semites', with the latter identified primarily as 'Arabs' and, more importantly, 'Jews'.[23] In the tradition of Lassen's 'Aryan–Semitic' dichotomy, Renan portrayed 'Semites' as 'non-Aryans' *per se*: two powerful 'asymmetrical concepts', in the words of Reinhart Kosseleck, that soon became widely popular.[24] Only the 'Aryans', according to the French thinker, were the real master race and meant to influence the destiny of mankind. Similarly, the Geneva linguist Adolphe Pictet identified the 'Aryans' as the chosen race (*une race destinée par la Providence*), predetermined to dominate the world.[25] Influenced by Lassen and Renan, he also believed in an antagonism between 'Semites' and superior 'Aryans'. The ancient 'Aryans', which he located in Iran and called 'Ario-Persans', were identified as the direct ancestors of the Europeans.

Perhaps the most important and renowned proponent of a racial version of the Aryan myth was Arthur Comte de Gobineau, who was fascinated by Iran, and had actually visited the country as a diplomat in the 1850s. In his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, he used the term 'Aryan' to refer to a 'primordial race' which had been, in his opinion, the elite of ancient India and Persia, as well as of contemporary nineteenth-century France.[26] Yet Gobineau detached the 'Aryan' from modern Asia. The last 'pure' 'Aryans', he believed, were the Germanics and included the French aristocracy and also himself. More generally, Gobineau saw the 'Aryans' and 'Semites' as part of a 'white race', which he distinguished from a 'yellow' and a 'black' one.

Scholars such as Müller, Gobineau, Pictet and Renan referred explicitly to the Indo-European linguistic family, an ancient 'Aryan' migration and a racial relationship to the East. But although their theories maintained considerable influence, in the late nineteenth century, the meaning of the term 'Aryan' began to change and diversify further, giving rise to a wide variety of concepts and meanings. More and more often, the term became detached from ideas of an Indo-European, Eastern and, indeed, Persian connection.

III. Popularisation

By the turn of the century, the term 'Aryan' had become popular among the racial and racist vocabulary of scholars, publicists and political activists, while at the same time undergoing a considerable diversification of meaning. A very abstract conception of 'Aryan' as a synonym for 'master race' or 'highest race' with specific physiological characteristics was used in the terminology of scientific race theories. Moreover, anti-Semites used the term as a synonym for 'non-Jewish'. Eventually, the term became widely used as a synonym for 'Nordic' or 'Germanic race'.

In the academic sphere, particularly in the scientific tradition of race theory, most scholars soon began to use the term 'Aryan' as a synonym for 'highest' race, and to describe specific phrenological and craniological characteristics and colour, essentially those meeting the physical traits of Linné's *Homo Europaeus*. Concerned with modern science – biology, anatomy and genetics – the French race scholars Marcelin Berthelot and Georges Vacher de Lapouge, as well as their German colleagues Adolf Bastian and Alfred Ploetz, social Darwinists like Ernst Haeckel, and eugenicists like Francis Galton, showed little or no interest in relating their research to ancient migration theories or philology.[27]

At the same time, the expression became prominent as a synonym for 'non-Jewish'. It was Houston Stewart Chamberlain who employed the term 'Aryan' not only to describe his 'master race', but also, influenced by Renan, as a demarcation from the Jews. Chamberlain also had much to say about ancient Persian history, which he used as an example to warn against the dangers of tolerance towards the 'Semites' and racial degeneration. The 'noble Persian king Cyrus', he wrote, 'with the naivety of the little shrewd Indo-European', allowed the Jews of Babylon to return to Jerusalem and supported the rebuilding of their temple. This, according to Chamberlain, was the Persian's deadly mistake, as 'under the protection of Aryan tolerance' a source of 'Semitic intolerance' was erected, which 'should disperse like a poison over the earth' and became a 'curse' in the following millennia.[28]

Chamberlain enjoyed particular influence over the German Emperor Wilhelm II, who gave orders to introduce Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* as compulsory reading for school teachers in training.[29] In a letter to Chamberlain, the Kaiser affirmed his approval of Chamberlain's theories, testifying his own satisfaction at having descended from 'Aryan' origins.[30] As late as 1923, Wilhelm II, then exiled in the Netherlands, would declare that the ancient Persians were the true ancestors of the Germanic peoples.[31] Indeed, many of the Kaiser's subjects shared this belief. On the occasion of the visit of Muzaffar al-Din Shah to Germany in 1902, for instance, the national German daily *Die Post* reported that the 'Persian people, whose leader we are honouring, is like the German from the Aryan line'.[32] The extent of the politicisation and popularisation of the scholarly

discourse in *fin-de-siècle* Europe may be addressed by future research. It seems that in Germany, where romanticism and volkish ideology – the emphasis of language and culture in defining national identity – was of particular importance in the nation-building process, Aryan legends were most influential.

Finally, German historians, anthropologists, cultural theorists, and, more importantly, amateur scholars began to develop a particular German, or Nordic, version of the 'Aryan' migration myth. In 1868, Theodor Bensen thought about the roots of the 'Aryans' in Europe.[33] From there, he believed, some of them migrated to Asia and founded the ancient civilisations of the East. On the Asian fringes they degenerated through mixing with foreign races; only the 'Nordic race', the core race in central and northern Europe, remained purely 'Aryan'. This 'northern thesis', which was still based on the idea of an Indo-European connection and based on linguistic arguments, soon became popular among German anthropologists and linguists like Lazarus Geiger,[34] Theodor Poesche,[35] Ludwig Wilser,[36] Karl Penka[37] and Gustaf Kossinna.[38] Variations in the theories of these scholars were marginal. While, for instance, Poesche detected the origins, or *Urheimat*, of his blond and blue-eyed 'Aryans' in the Rokitno swamps of Lithuania, Wilser and Penka believed they had found it in southern Scandinavia. The Aryan myth became a Germanic myth. The new theories further fuelled the trend to use the word 'Aryan' as a synonym for 'Nordic' or 'Germanic'.

The 'northern thesis' became especially influential among a more romantic and esoteric tradition of racism in Germany. Race mysticists like Paul Anton Lagarde, Julius Langbehn and Guido von List regarded 'Aryans' as unspoilt Germanics (*Urgermanen*) who lived close to nature, and far removed from contemporary materialism and liberal modernity.[39] Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels constructed a mystic heathen Germanic theory, which he called 'Aryanism' (*Arianismus*); he had a significant influence on the young Adolf Hitler in Vienna.[40]

IV. Nazi conceptions

The prominence of the term 'Aryan' in National Socialist vocabulary would discredit it in Europe once and for all. The Nazi regime's uses of the term 'Aryan' were ambiguous and inconsistent, reflecting the various developments it underwent since the nineteenth century. On the most general level, the Third Reich's ideologues and propagandists used the term as a synonym for 'Nordic', 'Germanic', 'German' and 'non-Jewish'.

With these meanings, the term was finally introduced into Germany's legal code. Although student fraternities in late-nineteenth-century Austria and interwar Germany had adopted so-called 'Aryan clauses' (*Arierklauseln*) in their statutes to exclude Jews, the Third Reich became the first state to introduce the term 'Aryan' into national law.[41] On 7 April 1933, Berlin issued the notorious

'Aryan Paragraph' (*Arierparagraph*), paragraph 3 of the so-called 'Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service'. Expressions like 'Aryan Paragraph', 'Proof of Aryan Ancestry' (*Ariernachweis*) or 'Aryanisation' (*Arisierung*) became fixed components of the regime's legal vocabulary. Their primary target was Jews. Yet, employing the concepts 'Aryan' and 'non-Aryan' instead of 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish', the laws soon discriminated against not only Jews, but a far wider group of people, including foreigners who initially were not intended as targets by the Nazi regime. Soon, foreign governments complained. To solve the problem, officials of the German Foreign Office, Interior Ministry, Propaganda Ministry, the Office of Race Politics of the Nazi party (NSDAP) and representatives of other agencies met on 15 November 1934.[42] Representatives of the Interior Ministry, a central authority in the field of racial legislation, suggested abolishing the expression 'Aryan' altogether and replacing it with 'non-Jewish'. Helmut Nicolai, a high-ranking official of the Interior Ministry, pleaded for a new racial law which would replace 'non-Aryan' with 'Jewish' and change the term 'Aryan' to 'non-Jewish', to affirm that the laws were directed solely against Jews. His colleague Hanns Seel discussed the term 'Aryan' in detail, concluding that it was indeed 'highly controversial and scientifically not clarified'. The line of the Interior Ministry was opposed by the head of the Race Office, Walter Gross, who represented Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess, revealing the usual rivalry between party and state agencies.[43] In order to avoid diplomatic frictions, Berlin eventually decided to adopt a pragmatic policy of *ad hoc* exceptions in cases where non-Jewish foreigners were affected.[44] The Nuremberg Laws of 1935, also primarily directed against German Jews, did not refer to 'Aryans' and 'non-Aryans' any more, but to the (no less ambiguous) expressions 'German or kindred blood' and 'Jews and other non-kindred people'. 'Kindred', in the working language of the Third Reich, referred to all European peoples, and to 'those of their descendants in the non-European parts of the world who kept themselves racially pure'.[45] The legal experiment with the term 'Aryan' had failed.

In contrast, politicised academic research made extensive use of historical, linguistic and racial ideas about the 'Aryan'. After all, complex concepts of an 'Aryan' race and its history were part of the ideological repertoire of leading Nazi ideologists. In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler used the term 'Aryan' as a synonym for 'master race', 'culture-bearing race' and, most importantly, 'non-Jewish'. Hitler's version of the ancient 'Aryan migration' followed a common pattern of historical development: since antiquity, the Nordic 'Aryan' race conquered foreign peoples and territories, founded great civilisations and finally perished because of a lack of racial hygiene.[46] In this narrative, the glories of all human civilisations were creations of the 'Aryan' master race. During the war, Hitler referred explicitly to the case of ancient Persia: 'Nations which did not rid themselves of Jews, perished. One of the most famous examples of this was the downfall of a people who were

once so proud – the Persians.'[47] Hitler's self-proclaimed chief ideologue Alfred Rosenberg drew an even more detailed picture of an ancient migration of a 'Nordic race'.[48] In his famous *Mythus des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, he described the old Persians as 'Aryans with northern blood', who had finally degenerated because of mixing with 'lower races':

> Once, the Persian king gave order to cut into the rock face of Behistun the following words: 'I, Darius the Great King, King of Kings, an Aryan, having Aryan lineage […]' Today the Persian muleteer pulls ahead soullessly by this wall: he represents thousands – culture and personality are born together with race and also die with it.[49]

For Rosenberg, Persian history served as a negative example of miscegenation (*Bastardierung*). Indeed, most National Socialist ideologues agreed with the idea that 'Aryans' – in their attempt to cultivate the Orient – perished as a result of infiltration (*Überfremdung*) by 'Semitic races'.

It was this ideological interpretation of the Aryan myth that influenced academic research on the 'Aryans' under the Nazi regime. A highly ideological and politicised discourse soon dominated many academic fields, including the works of experts in Iranian studies and Indologists, classists, historians and linguists, all eager to benefit from the prominence and popularity of the term 'Aryan'. They formed an interdisciplinary research field, a pendant to the Nazi discipline of *Deutsche Judenforschung* (literally: German Research on Jews).[50] Working willingly towards the Führer's theories, German scholars used their linguistic, historical and racial research to underpin the idea of an 'Aryan' race that originated in Northern Europe, and in ancient times spread over the globe, founding ancient civilisations like the Persian Empire, but eventually intermingled and mixed with native races, degenerated and failed. The last pure 'Aryans' survived only in the North, in Germanic lands. The myth was perfectly compatible with the everyday use and meaning of the terms like 'superior race', 'non-Jewish', 'Nordic' or 'Germanic', a fact that was also accepted by scholars who were not committed anti-Semites.

Orientalists, like Heinrich Schaeder, Heinrich Lüders and Wilhelm Weber, eagerly adopted the racial thesis of a northern migration to Asia.[51] In fact, it was research about the 'Aryans' and their indo-Germanic links to Asia that kept the field of Oriental studies alive during the years of the Third Reich.[52] As early as autumn 1934, a public lecture series was organised in Berlin, dedicated to the contemporary uses of the subject.[53] Both lectures on the ancient Orient, given by Wilhelm Weber and by Heinrich Lüders, addressed the idea of an ancient 'Aryan' race. In the first lecture of the series, Weber proclaimed that Adolf Hitler had called 'to write the world history of Aryan mankind', before outlining the thesis of an ancient migration from the North to the East.[54] His ideas about the nature

of the ancient 'Aryans' reflected some rather crude ideological ideals – authority, warrior spirit, primacy of blood bonds, pride. Persia, he lectured, had been a 'world power' – 'an Aryan power'.[55] Only infiltration by primitive, 'non-Aryan' peoples had led to its decline. Similarly, Heinrich Lüders made the case for the 'Aryan' migration, focusing mostly on India.[56] The most prominent Orientalist to promote the Aryan legend though was Heinrich Schaeder, who believed that northern European 'Aryans' once colonised the Middle East and Inner Asia to defend their Nordic homeland against Asiatic hordes. Schaeder drew particular parallels between ancient Persians and Germans.[57] 'Just like the Iranians laid out the historical foundations in the Middle East, the Germans formed the structure of Europe in the Middle Ages,'[58] 'Aryan' world history became the link between East and West. Even the ancient wars between Greeks and Persians were relativised as 'quarrels among brother people'.[59] Some experts in Iranian studies finally even linked 'Aryan' history to Iran under Reza Shah. Walther Hinz, a professor for Oriental studies in Berlin, began his Iranian history with the conquest of the 'Aryans', in his eyes an 'event of world political significance', and concluded with a homage to the Shah, 'who today means for Iran the same as Adolf Hitler does for Germany', and his politics of national renewal.[60] Yet research on the 'Aryans' was mostly limited to ancient Iran.

It was historians and classicists, among them eminent scholars like Helmut Berve or Fritz Schachermeyr, who were most inclined to foster racial theories of an ancient 'Aryan' migration.[61] Berve, a committed Nazi and professor of classics at the University of Leipzig, bluntly stated that the 'Aryan' Middle East had to be studied 'especially today, where the question about the destinies and world historical relevance of the Aryans has strongly come to the fore'. At the same time, he questioned the need for research on Semitic peoples of the Orient altogether, since he believed that their racial peculiarities could not possibly be understood by 'Aryan' Germans.[62] Equally ideologically charged was Schachermeyr's 1933 article on *Die nordische Führerpersönlichkeit im Altertum*, in which he introduced Zarathustra, Cyrus and Darius as northern heroes.[63] The 'failure' of the Persians to cultivate the Orient, Schachermeyr later wrote, leads back to the impossibility of overcoming the 'profound race differences' of the Orient, with all its enemies: the 'Armenian mercantile types', the 'Syrian, Asia Minor and Phoenician merchants' and, most of all, the Jews, which were 'the parasitic elements'.[64] The list of classicists who introduced similar ideologically charged, racist references to their 'Aryan' histories is long, and includes scholars like Wilhelm Sieglin and Peter Julius Junge.[65] Their ideas about ancient Iran as an 'Aryan' nation would also enter German school books.[66]

Even some Nazi racial scientists referred to the idea of an ancient Indo-Germanic migration, despite the fact that most of their colleagues had widely used the term 'Aryan' detached from any linguistic connections and ideas of an ancient migration

since the late nineteenth century. The notorious German racial theorist Hans Friedrich Karl Günther, professor of social anthropology in Jena, argued that the early 'Aryans', coming from the North, conquered vast lands in Asia around 2000 BC. Projecting all kinds of racial ideals on to the ancient 'Aryan' race, he emphasised, for instance, the ancient Persian king's concern for the 'sustainment and increase of Aryan Persianism [*Persertum*]'.[67] In 1922, Günther had already identified the old Persian Empire as a 'North-racial creation' (*nordrassische Schöpfung*).[68] His colleague, Gerhard Heberer, an anthropologist and racial theorist at the SS Race and Settlement Office, even purported to have found scientific evidence for the origins of an Indo-Germanic 'Aryan' race in central Germany. 'It didn't come to us from the outside, not from the East!' he proudly proclaimed.[69]

The most powerful promoter of the Aryan legend in Nazi Germany was Walther Wüst, professor at the 'Seminar for Indo-Germanic Studies' (renamed the 'Seminar for Aryan Cultural and Linguistic Studies' in 1935) at the University of Munich and, during the war, rector of the university.[70] Wüst also used the term 'Aryan' as synonymous with 'Nordic race', which, he believed, spread from its northern *Urheimat* to Asia. The Germans, he claimed, were descended in a direct genetic line from the ancient 'Aryans'.[71] His thoughts about Iran were more complex. Although he followed the usual narrative and believed that 'racial mixing' had led to 'degeneration' (*Entartung*) and 'denordification' (*Entnordnung*), Wüst expressed the hope for a renewal under the leadership of Reza Shah.[72] Wüst was also involved with the *SS Ahnenerbe*, which became the centre of classicist and anthropological research into 'Aryan prehistory'. A special office for the Near East even coordinated studies on the 'Aryan' impact on ancient Middle Eastern civilisations.[73] One of the most spectacular research trips of the *Ahnenerbe* was the 1938–9 expedition to Tibet led by the zoologist Ernst Schäfer.[74] Patron of the mission was Heinrich Himmler, personally fascinated by Aryan myth and the 'North theory'. Wüst's planned *Ahnenerbe* expedition to Iran to enquire into the ancient inscriptions of Behistun never materialised.[75]

The ideas about 'Aryans' as developed in the works of Wüst and other scholars differed considerably from the notion popularised by the ideological language of everyday life. This discrepancy impelled the linguist Hans Siegert to complain about the abstract and limited meaning of the term as a synonym for 'German or kindred blood', as its use ignored scholarly concepts on the 'Aryan' and obscured the Indo-European dimension.[76] Because of its abstract meaning in the official language of the regime, Siegert even suggested eschewing the term in scholarship altogether. He was an exception though. Most scholars happily benefited from the ideological prominence of the term.

Eventually, the term 'Aryan' was also employed in the diplomatic arena. Eager to develop strong economic, diplomatic and strategic relations with Middle Eastern countries, various diplomats and representatives of the Third Reich repeatedly

instrumentalised the Aryan myth, especially when dealing with Iran.[77] Reference to the 'Aryan' became a recurring topos in Germany's propaganda efforts directed towards the country. The earliest example of this instrumentalisation was the celebration of the 1,000th anniversary of Iranian poet Firdausi in 1934, with the official inauguration of the *Persische Straße* in Berlin. Mayor Heinrich Sahm did not miss the opportunity to point towards the 'surprising similarity with the German heroic sagas' and the common 'Aryan' ancestry before intoning a triple *Sieg Heil*.[78] The idea of the degeneration of the 'Aryan race' in the non-European world, as propagated by Hitler, Rosenberg and their academic following, and the prevalence of notions like 'Nordic' or 'Germanic' now commonly attached to the term in Germany, were cautiously ignored. Following the Allied invasion of Iran in the summer of 1941, the former German envoy to Tehran, Erwin Ettel, stressed the relevance of the 'Aryan' theme in his 'general guidelines for propaganda to Iran'.[79] Referring to the further need for anti-Semitic propaganda, he stated that 'Germany's battle against World Judaism' was also directed 'against the Jews in Iran, who want to force the Aryan Iranian people under their knout'. Indeed, German officials were convinced about the significant role an 'Aryan' consciousness played in Iran. Ettel's colleague, Hans Winkler, who had served in the cultural department at the German embassy in Tehran, declared that 'thanks to European scholarly enlightenment', Iranian upper classes were race-conscious – 'with the result that the Iranians feel themselves as Aryan'.[80]

V. Iranian nationalism

Winkler was not entirely wrong. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the Aryan myth had spread across the world. Nationalists from non-European countries where an Indo-European language was dominant enthusiastically adopted European thoughts about language, history and race, and the idea that people who spoke an Indo-European language were (or had been) racially superior.[81] From India to Afghanistan to Iran, the concept of an 'Aryan master race' took hold, a development that was part of the much wider story of the globalisation of modern ideologies, such as nationalism and racial thought.

To Iran, modern ideas and concepts about the 'Aryan' were first transferred in the late Qajar era. They played, in fact, a significant role in the nationalisation of Iran. Reflecting on their glorious ancient past and the Persian language, some nationalists found the Aryan myth (naturally in its Eastern version), as propagated by their European counterparts, an attractive national narrative.[82] Already the work of the social critic Mirza Fathali Akhundzadah, one of the early nationalist thinkers of modern Iran, reflects Renan's ideas of a distinction between 'Aryans' and 'Semites', although Akhundzadah made no direct reference to European scholars.[83] In his 'Letters of Kamal al-Dawlah and Jalal

al-Dawlah', first published in 1868, Akhundzadah pondered on the greatness of the Iranian nation (*millat-i Iran*) under the ancient Persian kings, and on its decline that followed the Arab invasion and the conquest of Islam.[84] Pre-Islamic Iran, in his view unspoiled by Arab (or Semitic) influence, was portrayed as a grand Indo-European civilisation. Indeed, the Aryan myth served as a convenient explanation for the country's apparent backwardness. In contrast to Germany, where the 'Semitic Other' was the Jew, for Iranian nationalists it was the Arab (or Islam). Soon, other Iranian intellectuals became more precise. In his work *A'inah-yi sikandari*, published in 1891, Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani set out to write the history of the 'Aryan nation' (*millat-i Aryan*). Kirmani's use of the term 'Aryan' was notably influenced by European ideas of Indo-European language, culture and race.[85] He even developed a linguistic and cultural theory to prove the similarity between French and Persian words. In his work *Sih maktub*, an imitation of Akhundzadah's *Maktubat*, Kirmani praised ancient Iran as it was before it was overrun by the 'barbarous' Arab hordes, which brought about the country's decline. Again, it was the dichotomy between 'Semites' and 'Aryans' that served as the explanatory historical rationale. Arab influence was perceived as genuinely unauthentic and destructive to Iranian culture. At the same time, the narrative stressed common roots with the admired Europeans. These ideas spread among Iranian intellectuals. An important role in this process was played by nationalist newspapers and periodicals, most famously Hasan Taqizadah's journal *Kavah*, which was published in Berlin from 1916 to 1922.[86] The Aryan myth would become a central pillar of Iranian nationalist discourse of the twentieth century.

In Pahlavi Iran, when nationalism became state ideology, the Aryan myth was popularised more widely. Promoting national mythology and Iranian antiquity, intellectuals and propagandists sought to employ the idea of an ancient 'Aryan' heritage to strengthen both national identity and the ruling dynasty's legitimacy. Concepts about the 'Aryans' flourished especially in the 1930s, producing, in the words of Alessandro Bausani, a kind of 'Aryan and Neo-Achaemenid nationalism', which maintained its influence during the entire Pahlavi period.[87] Later, Reza Shah's son and successor, Mohammad Reza, would call himself by the newly created title 'King of the Kings, Light of the Aryans' (*Shahanshah Aryamehr*). In the 1970s, he even went so far as to suggest a 'renascent Aryan brotherhood of Iran, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan' to guarantee regional peace and cooperation, and to 'hold high again the torch of a glorious humanitarian, liberal and moralistic civilisation'.[88]

As in Germany, classicists and historians became key figures in the promotion of Aryan legends.[89] One of the most widely circulated history textbooks of the early Pahlavi era, *Iran-i Qadim*, written by the distinguished Persian statesman Hasan Pirniya (Mushir al-Dawlah), discussed not only ideas of an ancient 'Aryan' migration, but also the racial characteristics of Iran's early 'Aryan' population.[90]

Pirniya generally differentiated between white, yellow, red, black and mixed races, emphasising that the 'white-skinned race', which included Iranians, were the Indo-European peoples.[91] Published in 1928, *Iran-i Qadim* was the earliest official history textbook of the Pahlavi period and became a standard text for middle school students. The book was, in fact, an abridged version of Pirniya's monumental (though unfinished), three-volume opus *Iran-e Bastan*, perhaps the most important work on pre-Islamic history produced during the Reza Shah years. Pirniya's work set the tone. Another history textbook, published by the political scientist Husayn Farhudi in 1933, followed his model. Farhudi too not only defined 'Iran' in geographical terms, but also introduced his readers to a racial dimension of Iranianness and emphasised that the world 'Iran' was derived from the term 'Arya'.[92] Similarly, in his textbook used in the first year of Iranian high schools, the eminent nationalist historian Abbas Iqbal Ashtiyani began the section on the history of Iran with reference to the 'Aryans', who, he explained, had populated the territory that formed the Iranian nation.[93] They were, he taught, 'of the white race', which was distinguished from the yellow, black and red races.[94] While explaining that members of the white and yellow races possessed the highest intellectual capabilities, he identified the black race as the 'least talented people'.[95] Eventually, even the idea of the degeneration of the ancient Persian 'Aryans' was taken up. In 1930, the nationalist writer Abu al-Hasan Furughi claimed that the causes for Iran's decline lay in the mixing of the Iranians with other races.[96]

Following the European tradition of volkish and nationalist thought, Iranian nationalists regarded language as the central characteristic of national culture and race.[97] Indeed, an increasing number of Iranian linguists began to investigate the Indo-European roots of their language. In 1935, the language academy, *Farhangistan*, was created in Tehran with the goal to cleanse the Persian language of foreign, particularly Arabic and Turkish, loanwords in order to uncover the pure Indo-European, or 'Aryan' as Lassen had first called it, language – pure Persian (*Farsi-yi sarah*).

In the same year, Reza Shah ordered that the country should be called Iran instead of Persia in all international communications and correspondence from 22 March 1935 onwards. The name 'Iran' (or *Iranshahr*) is a cognate of 'Aryan' and refers to 'Land of the Aryans'. It had been used by Iranians since the era of the Sasanids, who had created the term in the third century AD in memory of the Achaemenid monarchy.[98] Influenced by ancient Greek writers, only Europeans usually spoke of 'Persia'. Tehran's attempt to promote the name 'Iran' internationally was another element of Reza Shah's nationalist campaign. The official explanation for the decision was that the name 'Persia' derived from the southern province 'Fars', and was consequently incorrect as a name for the entire country. Furthermore, the term 'Iran' had been used by Persians to speak about their country for centuries, whereas Persia was seen as a name used by

European colonial powers. Soon, moreover, rumours emerged suggesting that the Shah was influenced by the political significance that the 'Aryan' idea had attained in Germany.

Indeed, parts of the Pahlavi elite was much impressed by German, Italian and above all Kemalist politics of authoritarianism, and ideas of national renewal and purification. On the other hand, the common belief that Nazi Germany enjoyed an outstanding reputation in Iran and kept strong relations with the Pahlavi government is hardly accurate.[99] During the 1930s, Nazi Germany and Iran repeatedly found themselves on opposite sides of the international arena and their relations were characterised by constant frictions; after all, a number of powerful Iranian officials and ministers were pro-British or openly anti-German.[100] Nevertheless, documents stored in the Iranian National Archives in Tehran suggest that considerations about Germany did play a role in the process – though a subordinate one. A memorandum from the Foreign Ministry that was addressed to all Iranian embassies abroad acknowledged that the idea to popularise the name 'Iran' in international society had, in fact, initially come from the Persian legation in Berlin.[101] The name 'Persia', it was explained, was historically (*tarikhi*), geographically (*jughrafiya'i*) and racially (*nizhadi*) incorrect. The ministry gave four reasons which had convinced the imperial court to agree to the delegation's proposal. While the first two points stressed that Persia, as a province, was not identical to the wider country of Iran, the last point alluded to the idea that foreigners associated the word 'Persia' with prejudices and images of weakness, poverty, ignorance, chaos and shaky sovereignty under previous regimes. The third reason concerned 'racial considerations'. As Iran formed 'the racial origins of the Aryans', it was argued, it was only 'natural that we make use of this name' – especially as 'much noise' was 'made in great countries about the Aryan race' and as 'some countries pride themselves in being Aryan'. Tehran gave out a number of orders to use the word 'Iran' in international correspondence, to rename their embassies abroad from 'Persian embassy' to 'Iranian embassy', to make similar changes in letterheads and envelopes, to inform publishers of dictionaries and map makers across Europe, and to actively propagate the name 'Iran'.[102] The memorandum was sent out a day later, together with a letter written by the Iranian Foreign Secretary, Baqir Kazimi, on the issue.[103]

In Germany, the press reacted with enthusiasm. The party organ *Völkischer Beobachter* announced the renaming with an article about the ancient 'Aryan' history of Iran and its racial connections to German history, eventually praising Reza Shah's politics of national renewal.[104] Iran, it was explained, meant 'land of the Aryans' (*Arierland*) and the term 'Aryan' had once been used by the noble ancient Persians.

In its announcement to the German ambassador in Tehran, the Pahlavi regime referred to the official argument, pointing out in very general terms that the name

'Persia' was historically, ethnographically and geographically incorrect.[105] When the German envoy in Tehran, Wipert von Blücher, enquired into the motives, Tehran explained that Persia was geographically limited to the province 'Fars' and therefore an incorrect expression for the entire country. 'Aryan' fraternisations were avoided. Documents stored in the archives of the Foreign Ministry in Berlin show that the issue was only raised when Iranian diplomats felt that Iran's claim of being an 'Aryan' nation was not genuinely shared by the Germans.[106] Just after the renaming in 1935, the Shah's delegation in Berlin complained to the Foreign Office that Iranians would be discriminated against as 'non-Aryans' in Germany.[107] Stressing the 'Aryan' nature of Iranians, Persian diplomats emphasised that the renaming took place, among other reasons, in order to demonstrate that early Persia actually was 'the cradle of the Aryans [*Ariertum*]', and urged for a definite decision about the question. In an internal note, a German diplomat remarked 'that the question, considering the self-esteem of the Iranians, is very delicate and in case of a purely negative decision would lead to a regarding our political and economic relations to Iran unwanted reaction, especially of the Shah himself'.

Even more delicate, though, was the news spread in the following year by the French newspaper *Le Temps* that Berlin had decided not to categorise Iranians, along with Egyptians and Iraqis, as 'Aryan', whereas Turkey was considered to be an 'Aryan nation' and Turks exempt from the Nuremberg Laws.[108] The report was taken up by the foreign press and sparked international protest. It was a hoax. In fact, Berlin had classified Turks as a 'European people' (not as 'Aryans'), in contrast to the other Middle Eastern countries.[109] Yet this decision had no practical consequences. Foreign citizens (both from Europe and the non-European world) were not, as long as they were non-Jewish, targeted by the Nuremberg Laws.[110] Berlin had also never classified an entire nation as 'Aryan' or 'non-Aryan', and indeed was very cautious in using the term 'Aryan' in official texts at all after 1934. Before Germany could react, Tehran's ambassador to Turkey, Noury Esfandiary, confronted the German legation in Ankara with the report, threatening further diplomatic measures.[111] In Berlin, the Iranian ambassador complained at the Foreign Office, explaining that there was no doubt about the fact 'that the Iranian people are kindred' with the Germans.[112] In fact, the ambassador emphasised that Iranians were virtually the ancestors of the German people.[113] Meanwhile, in Tehran, where the news had also caused some consternation, Iranian officials underpinned their claim that the Persian people were kindred by referring to a recently deciphered ancient Xerxes inscription, which exposed their 'Aryan characteristics'.[114] Berlin reacted to the whole affair by dismissing the reports as 'unfounded and wrong'.[115] In a press memorandum, Wilhelmstrasse stated that the report was obviously false, given that the Nuremberg Laws do not refer to the term 'Aryan' at all.[116] Still, the Iranian

ambassador in Berlin requested a more explicit clarification of whether Iranians were considered as 'Aryans' by German law.

On 1 July 1936, the issue was discussed during a meeting at the Wilhelmstrasse.[117] Walter Gross made clear that any formal declaration was out of the question. 'The envoy can, on no account however, expect that the Iranians, lock, stock and barrel, be declared as Aryans,' he sneered, reminding that the 'term Aryan' (*Arierbegriff*) would be defined in each particular case. The head of the Race Office suggested settling the issue verbally in a personal conversation with Tehran's envoy and, indeed, met with the Iranian ambassador the following week.[118] Gross was unimpressed when the diplomat explained to him that Iranians were the 'ancestors of the Aryan race', and he evaded definitive statements. The Iranian ambassador, in the end, had to content himself with the affirmation that marriages between (non-Jewish) Iranians and Germans were not affected by the Nuremberg Laws.[119] Yet Iranians were never officially classed as 'Aryans' by the Nazi regime.[120] This did not seem to prevent the Germans from appealing for an 'Aryan' fraternity in their propaganda efforts towards Iran. The fall of the Third Reich marked the end of the popularity of the term 'Aryan' in Europe. In the non-European world, the 'Aryan' complex has remained a strong component of nationalist discourse and mythology to the present day.

Notes

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1. Scholarship on the 'Aryan myth' has almost exclusively focused on the role of India in European concepts of the 'Aryan'; see the classic by Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth* (New York, 1974), and more recently Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, 1997), and Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism and the British Empire* (New York, 2002). Some references to Iran can be found in Klaus von See, '*Der Arier-Mythos*', in Nikolaus Buschmann and Dieter Langewiesche (eds), *Der Krieg in den Gründungsmythen europäischer Nationen und der USA* (Frankfurt, 2003), 56–96; Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (Chicago, 2006); and Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge, 2009), 123–41, 292–321. A more prominent role has been ascribed to Iran by Josef Wiesehöfer, '*Zur Geschichte der Begriffe "Arier" und "arisch" in der deutschen Sprachwissenschaft und Althistorie des 19. und der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*', in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Jan Willem Drijvers (eds), *The Roots of the European Tradition: Proceedings of the 1987 Groningen Achaemenid History Workshop* (Leiden, 1990), 149–67.

2. On the history of concepts, see the articles in Reinhart Koselleck (ed.), *Historische Semantik und Begriffsgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1979). The term 'Aryan' has no entry in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, 8 vols (Stuttgart, 1972–97), although references to the term are made in the entries on anti-Semitism (Vol. 1, 129–53, 130–1) and racism (Vol. 5, 135–78, 158–61).
3. Quote in *Ancient Persian Lexicon and the Texts of the Achaemenidan Inscriptions Transliterated and Translated with Special References to their Recent Re-examination*, ed. by Herbert Cushing Tolman (New York *et al.*, 1908), 43.
4. The ancient meanings of the term are not part of this chapter; see, for instance, Thomas R. Trautmann, *The Aryan Debate* (New Delhi, 2005); and '*Aria*' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica (EIr)*, ed. by Ehsan Yarshater, Vol. 2 (London and New York, 1987), 404–5; '*Arya*' in *EIr*, Vol. 2 (London and New York, 1987), 681–3; '*Aryan*' in *EIr*, Vol. 2 (London and New York, 1987), 684–7; for a critical assessment, see Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York, 1993), 75–81.
5. Anquetil du Perron, '*Recherches sur les anciennes langues de la Perse*', in *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 31 (1768), 339–441.
6. J. F. Kleuker, *Zend-Avesta*, Theil 2 (Riga, 1777), 57; for other Germans, who took up the term as the name for ancient Persians, see Wiesehöfer, '*Zur Geschichte*', 150.
7. William Jones, 'The third anniversary discourse: on the Hindus', in *Asiatick Researches* 1 (1788), 415–31, 422. On the contribution of native scholars to Jones' work, see Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Orientalism's genesis amnesia', in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 16(2) (1996), 1–14.
8. Franz Bopp, *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache* (Frankfurt, 1816).
9. Isaiah Berlin would later speak about 'linguistic patriotism'; see Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London, 1976), 151; see also Wolfgang Emmerich, *Zur Kritik der Volkstumsideologie* (Frankfurt, 1971); and the classics George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (London, 1978), 35–50, and idem, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964), 13–30; a comprehensive overview is given by Thomas Nipperdey, '*Auf der Suche nach Identität: Romantischer Nationalismus*', in idem, *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte* (Munich, 1986), 110–25. On the general fascination of German romantic thinkers with the 'Orient', see René Gérard, *L'Orient et la pensée romantique allemandes* (Paris, 1963).
10. Friedrich Schlegel, '*Ueber J.G. Rhode: Ueber den Anfang unserer Geschichte und die letzte Revolution der Erde, 1819*', in idem, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Vol. 10 (Vienna, 1825), 265–365, quotes on 343–4 (first published in *Wiener Jahrbücher der Literatur*, 8 (1819), 413–68; republished in Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, ed. by Ernst Behler, Vol. 8 (Paderborn *et al.*, 1975), 474–528).
11. German philologists called this 'Indo-Germanic', combining the names of its easternmost and westernmost components. Philologists in France and Britain – since Jones – preferred the name 'Indo-European'.

12. L. C. Beaufort, 'An essay upon the state of architecture and antiquities, previous to the landing of the Anglo-Normans in Ireland', in *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, 15 (1828), 110–241, quote on 205; see also T. Ballantyne, *Orientalism*, 37–8; see also Ali M. Ansari, 'Persia in the Western imagination', in Vanessa Martin (ed.), *Anglo-Iranian Relations Since 1800* (Abingdon, 2005), 8–20, 16.
13. Beaufort, 'An essay', 210.
14. On this shift from 'culture' to 'race', see Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 35–62; Christine Morgenstern, *Rassismus: Konturen einer Ideologie* (Hamburg, 2002), 130–69. On language and race in the nineteenth century, see Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge MA, 1992); Ruth Römer, *Sprachwissenschaft und Rassenideologie in Deutschland* (Munich, 1985), especially 62–84. Key figures of cultural-biological race thought are discussed in Peter Emil Becker, *Sozialdarwinismus, Rassismus, Antisemitismus und Völkischer Gedanke: Wege ins Dritte Reich*, Vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1990).
15. Frédéric-Gustave Eichhoff, *Parallèle des langues de l'Europe et de l'Inde* (Paris, 1836), 12–13.
16. Christian Lassen, '*Über Herrn Professor Bopps grammatisches System der Sanskrit-Sprache*', in *Indische Bibliothek*, 3(1) (1830), 1–113, 71; Lassen used both expressions '*Rasse*' and '*Volk*'. On Lassen's role in the history of racism, see Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 196–7.
17. Christian Lassen, *Indische Altertumskunde*, Vol. I (Leipzig, 1847), 414.
18. Ibid., 414–17, quotes on 414 and 415.
19. Lassen, '*Über Herrn Professor Bopps*', 70–1.
20. F. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language, Second Series* (London, 1864); Müller regularly also speaks of 'Aryan nations' and the 'Aryan race'.
21. Ibid., 403–4.
22. F. Max Müller, *Three Lectures on the Science of Language* (Chicago, 1890), 70. Müller would later reject his racial Aryan theories; see F. Max Müller, *Über die Resultate der Sprachwissenschaft: Vorlesung, gehalten in der kaiserlichen Universität Straßburg am 23. Mai 1872* (Straßburg, 1872).
23. See, particularly, Ernest Renan, '*Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques*' (Paris, 1858 [1855]); idem, *Études d'histoire religieuse* (Paris, 1857); idem, *De l'origine du langage* (Paris, 1858); see also Shmuel Almog, 'The racial motif in Renan's attitude to Jews and Judaism', in Shmuel Almog (ed.), *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (Oxford, 1988), 255–78.
24. Reinhart Koselleck, 'The historical-political semantics of asymmetric counter-concepts', in idem, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 2004 [first published in German in 1975]), 155–91. Koselleck concentrates on the binary concepts 'Hellenes'/'Barbarians', 'Christians'/'Heathens' and 'Übermensch'/'Untermensch', but also briefly refers to 'Aryan'/'Non-Aryan' on 190–1.
25. Adolphe Pictet, *Les origines indo-européenne ou le Aryas primitifs: Essai de paléontologie linguistique*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1859 [1850]), 1.
26. Le Comte de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris, 1853/55).
27. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 58–62, 75–93; a classic (though often uncritical) overview of the history of anthropological race theory is Wilhelm E. Mühlmann, *Geschichte der Anthropologie* (Bonn, 1948), part V; see also reference 14.

28. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Vol. 1 (Munich, 1907 [1899]), 509.
29. Lamar Cecil, '*Wilhelm II. und die Juden*', in Werner E. Mosse (ed.), *Juden im Wilhelminischen Deutschland, 1890–1914* (Tübingen, 1976), 313–47, 330–1; see also Volker Losemann, '*Rassenideologien und antisemitische Publizistik in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*', in Thomas Klein, Volker Losemann and Günther Mai (eds), *Judentum und Antisemitismus von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Düsseldorf, 1984), 137–59, 146.
30. Wilhelm II to Chamberlain, 31 December 1901, Potsdam, printed in Houston Steward Chamberlain, Briefe 1882–1924, 2 vols (Munich, 1928), Vol. 2, 141–4.
31. The Kaiser's comments were published in *Welt Rundschau* on 7 July 1924, quoted in Raoul Patry, *La religion dans l'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui: Catholicisme, Protestantisme, Christianisme Paien et Racisme, Judaisme* (Paris, 1926), 165.
32. '*Zur Ankunft des Schahs von Persien*', in *Die Post* (28 May 1902).
33. Theodor Bensen, '*Vorwort*', in F. C. August Fick, *Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Grundsprache in ihrem Bestande vor der Völkertrennung* (Göttingen, 1868), v–x.
34. Lazarus Geiger, *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschheit* (Stuttgart, 1871).
35. Theodor Poesche, *Die Arier: Ein Beitrag zur historischen Anthropologie* (Jena, 1878).
36. Ludwig Wilser, *Die Herkunft der Deutschen: Neue Forschungen über Urgeschichte, Abstammung und Verwandtschaftsverhältnisse unseres Volkes* (Karlsruhe, 1885).
37. Karl Penka, *Die Herkunft der Arier: Neue Beiträge zur historischen Anthropologie der europäischen Völker* (Vienna and Teschen, 1886).
38. Gustav Kossinna, *Die Deutsche Vorgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1912); see also idem, *Die Indogermanen, I. Teil: Das indogermanische Urvolk* (Leipzig, 1925).
39. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 94–112; idem, *The Crisis of German Ideology*; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi ideology* (London, 2003 [1985]); Stefan Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland. Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Darmstadt, 2008), 25–144; Uwe Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich. Sprache – Rasse – Religion* (Darmstadt, 2001); see also articles in Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz and Justus H. Ulbricht (eds), *Handbuch zur Völkischen Bewegung 1871–1918* (Munich, 1999).
40. Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab: Von den religiösen Verirrungen eines Sektierers zum Rassenwahn des Diktators* (Munich, 1958).
41. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 162.
42. Minutes, Berlin, 15 November 1934, Archives of the German Foreign Office (*Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts*) (PA), R99182; see also the following documents in that file.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.; the decision was officially adopted and circulated by a directive on 18 April 1935; see Interior Ministry, Internal Note, Berlin, 18 April 1935, PA, R78307; see also Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office) to Interior Ministry (Copies to Race Office, Reich Chancellery, and Propaganda Ministry), Berlin, 28 February 1937, PA, R99182. A new attempt to revive the issue in 1937 by Bülow-Schwante could not get support from other agencies of the regime; see, for instance, Gross (NSDAP Race Office) to Foreign Office, Berlin, 28 April 1937, PA, R99182.

45. See, for instance, Hinrichs (Foreign Office) to all ministries and Reich Chancellery, 30 March 1936, PA, R99173; and other documents in R99173. Officials referred to the definition of Stuckart-Globke's *Kommentare zur deutschen Rassegesetzgebung*.
46. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1942 [1925–6]), 317–31, especially 319.
47. Notes on a discussion between Hitler and Horthy, 17 April 1943, quote in Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London, 1986), 556.
48. Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich, 1936 [1930]), 21–34; for a general overview, see Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (London, 1972), 82–104.
49. Rosenberg, *Mythus*, 34.
50. On *Judenforschung*, see Dirk Rupnow, Vernichten und Erinnern: Spuren nationalsozialistischer Gedächtnispolitik (Göttingen, 2005), 137–231; idem, '*Judenforschung*', in Michael Fahlbusch and Ingo Haar (eds), *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften* (Munich, 2008), 312–22; Nicolas Berg and Dirk Rupnow (eds), *Judenforschung: Zwischen Wissenschaft und Ideologie*, issue of the Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook, 5 (2006), 257–598.
51. Ekkehard Ellinger, *Deutsche Orientalistik zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, 1933–1945* (Neckarhausen, 2006), 300–15; a concise overview is given by Ludmilla Hanisch, '*Zur Geschichte der Semisitik und Islamwissenschaften während des "dritten Reichs"*', in *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, 4 (1995), 221–3; Stefan R. Hauser, '*Deutsche Forschungen zum Alten Orient und ihre Beziehungen zu politischen und ökonomischen Interessen vom Kaiserreich bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg*', in *Comparativ: Leipziger Beiträge zur Universalgeschichte und vergleichenden Gesellschaftsforschung*, 14(1) (2004), 46–65; Sheldon Pollock, '*Ex Oriente Nox: Indologie im nationalsozialistischen Staat*', in Sebastian Conrad and Randeria Shalini (eds), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt, 2002), 335–71.
52. Ibid.; Hauser, '*Deutsche Forschungen*', 61.
53. The lecture series was titled '*Die deutsche Orientforschung, ihre Gegenwartsbedeutung und ihre Gegenwartsaufgaben*', and the papers were printed in Hans Heinrich Schaeder (ed.), *Der Orient und wir: Sechs Vorträge* (Berlin, 1935).
54. Wilhelm Weber, '*Der Alte Orient*', in Schaeder (ed.), *Der Orient und wir*, 1–30, quote on 4.
55. Ibid., 29–30.
56. Heinrich Lüders, '*Indien*', in Schaeder (ed.), *Der Orient und wir*, 68–91.
57. Hans Heinrich Schaeder, '*Asien und die Ostgrenze der europäischen Kultur*', in idem (ed.), *Der Orient in deutscher Forschung: Vorträge der Berliner Orientalistentagung Herbst 1942* (Leipzig, 1944), 6–17; for similar affinity to the 'Aryan Persians', see idem, '*Der neuere Orient*', in idem (ed.), *Der Orient und wir*, 31–55, in idem, '*Das persische Weltreich*', in *Die Weltreiche der Geschichte und die Großraumidee der Gegenwart: Vorträge der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau*, ed. by University of Breslau and Universitätsbund Breslau (Breslau, 1942), 9–39; idem, '*Europa – Naher Osten – Asien*', in *Der Nahe Osten*, 4 (1943), 1–10; idem, '*Firdosi und die Deutschen*', in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 88 (1934), 118–29.

58. Hans Heinrich Schaeder, '*Iran und Deutschland*', in *Orientnachrichten*, 4 (1938), 1–2, 2.
59. Schaeder, '*Asien und die Ostgrenze*', 9.
60. Walther Hinz, *Iran: Politik und Kultur von Kyros bis Rezâ Schah* (Leipzig, 1938), 11 and 113; see also idem, *Irans Aufstieg zm Nationalstaat im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1936), 124. Hinz's colleague Herbert Melzig praised the 'Iranian Renaissance' under Reza Shah, however, without referring to the 'Aryans'; see Herbert Melzig, *Resa Schah: Der Aufstieg Irans und die Grossmächte* (Stuttgart, 1936), 137.
61. Josef Wiesehöfer, '*Das Bild der Achaimeniden in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*', in Amélie Kuhrt and Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg (eds), *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory* (Leiden, 1988), 1–14; see also Johannes Renger, '*Die Geschichte der Altorientalistik und der vorderasiatischen Archäologie in Berlin von 1875 bis 1945*', in Willmuth Arenhövel and Christa Schreiber (eds), *Berlin und die Antike* (Berlin, 1979), 151–92; Volker Losemann, *Nationalsozialismus und Antike* (Hamburg, 1977); Beat Näf, *Von Perikles zu Hitler? Die athenische Demokratie und die deutsche Althistorie bis 1945* (Frankfurt *et al.*, 1986).
62. Helmut Berve, '*Zur Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orients*', in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 25 (1935), 216–30; quote on 222; his thoughts on 'non-Aryan' races, 228–30. Berve had already praised the ancient Persians in his famous *Greek History* of 1931; see idem, *Griechische Geschichte I: Von den Anfängen bis Perikles* (Freiburg, 1931), 213.
63. Fritz Schachermeyr, '*Die nordische Führerpersönlichkeit im Altertum: Ein Baustein zur Weltanschauung des Nationalsozialismus*', in *Humanistische Bildung im nationalsozialistischen Staate, Neue Wege zur Antike*, 1, 9 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1933), 36–43.
64. Idem, *Indogermanen und Orient: Ihre kulturelle und machtpolitische Auseinandersetzung im Altertum* (Stuttgart, 1944), 149.
65. Wilhelm Sieglin, *Die blonden Haare der indogermanischen Völker des Altertums: Eine Sammlg der antiken Zeugnisse als Beitrag zur Indogermanenfrage* (Munich, 1935); Peter Julius Junge, *Dareios I. König der Perser* (Leipzig, 1944).
66. Wiesehöfer, '*Das Bild der Achaimeniden*', 10–11.
67. Hans Friedrich Karl Günther, *Die nordische Rasse bei den Indogermanen Asiens: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Urheimat und Rassenherkunft der Indogermanen* (Munich, 1934), 110; for an overview, see Günter Altner, *Weltanschauliche Hintergründe der Rassenlehre des Dritten Reiches: Zum Problem einer umfassenden Anthropologie* (Zürich, 1968).
68. Hans Friedrich Karl Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (Munich, 1922), 267; similar views also in idem, *Rassenkunde Europas* (Munich, 1929).
69. Gerhard Heberer, *Rassengeschichtliche Forschungen im indogermanischen Urheimatgebiet* (Jena, 1943), 70.
70. Walter Wüst, *Indogermanisches Bekenntnis: Sechs Reden* (Berlin, 1942); see also idem, *Indogermanisches Bekenntnis: Sieben Reden* (Berlin, 1943); on his career, see Maximilian Schreiber, *Walther Wüst: Dekan und Rektor der Universität München 1935–1945* (Munich, 2008); Wiesehöfer, '*Zur Geschichte*', 153.
71. Wüst, *Indogermanisches Bekenntnis* (1942), 43.
72. Ibid., 23–30, especially 28–9 (on decline) and 30 (on Reza Shah).

73. Michael H. Kater, *Das 'Ahnenerbe' der SS: 1935–1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Munich, 2006 [1974]), 111–12; and more generally Reinhard Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner: Studien zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem* (Stuttgart, 1970).
74. Good overviews are given by Christopher Hale, *Himmler's Crusade: The Nazi Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race* (Hoboken NJ, 2003); Wolfgang Kaufmann, *Das Dritte Reich und Tibet: Die Heimat des 'östlichen Hakenkreuzes' im Blickfeld der Nationalsozialisten* (Ludwigsfelde, 2009); and Reinert Greve, '*Tibetforschung im NS-Ahnenerbe*', in Thomas Hauschild (ed.), *Lebenslust und Fremdenfurcht: Ethnologie im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt, 1995), 168–99.
75. Kater, *Das 'Ahnenerbe' der SS: 1935–1945*, 97.
76. Hans Siegert, '*Zur Geschichte der Begriffe "Arier" und "arisch"*', in *Wörter und Sachen*, 4 (1941/42), 73–99, 99.
77. On German-Iranian relations, see S. Djalal Madani, *Iranische Politik und Drittes Reich* (Frankfurt, 1986); Yair P. Hirschfeld, *Deutschland und Iran im Spielfeld der Mächte: Internationale Beziehungen unter Reza Schach 1921–1941* (Düsseldorf, 1980), 135–308; idem, 'German policy towards Iran: continuity and change from Weimar to Hitler, 1919–39', in Jehuda L. Wallach (ed.), *Germany and the Middle East 1835–1939* [*Beiheft des Jahrbuchs des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte Tel Aviv* 1] (Tel Aviv, 1975), 117–41, especially 125–41; Ahmad Mahrad, *Die Wirtschafts- und Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Iran und dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Reich* (Frankfurt and Bern, 1982).
78. '*Abschluß der deutschen Firdosi-Feiern*', in *Hochschule und Ausland*, 13(1) (1935), 78–9; The *Persische Straße* was renamed *Iranische Straße* in 1935; see Heidrun Joop, *Berliner Straßen: Beispiel Wedding* (Berlin, 1987), 108. For German cultural propaganda in Iran in 1934–5, see Hirschfeld, *Deutschland und Iran*, 152–5.
79. Ettel, Report '*Richtlinien für die dt. Prop. nach dem Iran*', 24 August 1942, Berlin, PA, R27329.
80. Winkler, Report '*Aufzeichnung des ehemaligen Kulturreferenten der Deutschen Gesandtschaft in Teheran: Erfahrungen aus der deutschen Propagandaarbeit in Iran vom November 1939 bis September 1941*', 10 January 1942, Berlin, PA, R60690. The extent to which the Aryan myth was actually exploited by German propaganda is unknown. Very little documentation of the German propaganda towards Iran survived the war. The remaining propaganda broadcast transcripts (from the years 1940–1) provide no evidence of a massive propagandistic utilisation of the Aryan myth; see the transcripts in Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BA), R901/73039.
81. On the reception by Hindu nationalists, see, for instance, Ballantyne, *Orientalism*, 169–87; and Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford, 2001), especially 7–40, 204–6. On the Aryan legend and Afghan nationalism, see Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization 1880–1946* (Stanford, 1969), 345–7; Senzil K. Nawid, 'Tarzi and the emergence of Afghan nationalism: Afghan search for identity', in *The American Institute of Afghanistan Studies*, Online Publication (2009).
82. On early Aryan ideas in Qajar Iran by writers like Akhundzadah, Kirmani and Taqizadah, see Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, 'Cultures of Iranianness: the evolving

polemic of Iranian nationalism', in Nikki Keddie and Rudi Matthee (eds), *Iran and the Surrounding World 1501–2001: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle, 2002), 162–81, esp. 165–6; and Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940* (Washington, 2008), 49–85, especially 66–75, 76–83. Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, 'Self-Orientalisation and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the Aryan Discourse in Iran', in *Iranian Studies* 44(4) (2011), 445–72 provides a general account of ideas and debates about Aryanism among intellectuals in modern Iran.

83. On the impact on the 'Aryan myth' and Renan's influence on Akhundzadah, see Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 73–5; Maryam B. Sanjabi, 'Rereading the enlightment: Akhundzadah and his Voltaire', in *Iranian Studies*, 28(1/2) (1995), 39–60; Mehrdad Kia, 'Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade and the call for modernization in the Islamic world', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31(3) (1995), 422–48, 427; on Akhundzadah in general, see Juan R. I. Cole, 'Marking boundaries, marking times: the Iranian past and the construction of the self by Qajar thinkers', *Iranian Studies*, 29(1/2) (1996), 35–56, 37–43; Iraj Parsinejad, *Mirza Fath' Ali Akhundzadeh and Literary Criticism* (Tokyo, 1988); Shaul Bakhash, *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars: 1858–1896* (London, 1878), 1–75, especially 41–3; Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* (New York, 2001), 96–112; idem, 'Refashioning Iran: language and culture during the Constitutional Revolution', in *Iranian Studies*, 23(1/4) (1990), 77–101.
84. Mirza Fathali Akhundzadah, *Maktubat*, ed. by M. Subhdam (Düsseldorf, 1364/1985 [1868]).
85. Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, *A'inah-yi sikandari* (Tehran, 1906); on Kirmani in general, see Iraj Parsinejad, 'Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani and literature', in *Iran Nameh*, 8(4) (1990), 541–66; Bakhash, *Iran*, 303–73, especially 345–6; and Ansari, 'Persia in the Western imagination', 16–17; Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 96–112; idem, 'Refashioning Iran'; and idem, 'Crafting history and fashioning Iran: the reconstruction of Iranian identity in modernist historical narratives', in *Iran Nameh*, 12(4) (1994), 583–628.
86. Taqizadah published several major articles in *Kavah*, summarising the ideas of European scholars of Iran and Aryan theories; see Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 79–80.
87. Alessandro Bausani, 'Muhammad or Darius? The elements and basis of Iranian culture', in Speros Vryonis Jr (ed.), *Islam and Cultural Changes in the Middle Ages* (Wiesbaden, 1975), 43–57, 46; see also 'Iranian identity' in *EIr*, Vol. 8 (New York, 2006), 501–30, 527.
88. Rustom Khurshedji Karanjia, *The Mind of a Monarch* (London, 1977), 236.
89. Kashani-Sabet, 'Cultures of Iranianness', 174–6; Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 99–104.
90. Hasan Pirniya, *Iran-i Qadim* (Tehran, 1307/1928).
91. Ibid., 8.
92. Husayn Farhudi, *Dawrah-yi umumi-yi tarikh* (Tehran, 1312/1933).
93. Abbas Iqbal Ashtiyani, *Dawrah-yi tarikh-i umumi* (Tehran, 1312/1933).
94. Ibid., 133.
95. Ibid., 17–18.

96. Abu al-Hasan Furughi, *Tahqiq dar haqiqat-i tajaddud va milliyat* (Tehran, 1309/1930), 34.
97. John R. Perry, 'Language reform in Turkey and Iran', in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 17 (1985), 295–311; Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, 'Language reform movement and its language: the case of Persian', in Björn H. Jernudd and Michael J. Shapiro (eds), *The Politics of Language Purism* (Berlin and New York, 1989), 81–104; Mehrdad Kia, 'Persian nationalism and the campaign for language purification', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34 (1998), 9–36.
98. Bert G. Fragner, '*Historische Wurzeln neuzeitlicher iranischer Identität: Zur Geschichte des politischen Begriffs "Iran" im späten Mittelalter und in der Neuzeit*', in Rudolpho Macuch (ed.), *Studia Semitica Necnon Iranica* (Wiesbaden, 1989), 79–100, 88–91; see also Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origin* (Rome, 1989).
99. For the common narrative, see, for instance, George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran* (Ithaca, 1949), 151–66; Ahmad Mahrad, *Iran unter der Herrschaft Reza Schahs* (Frankfurt, 1977), 30–1; Madani, *Iranische Politik*, x, 518–32.
100. A more complex picture is presented by Hirschfeld, who argues that Irano–German relations were shifting and ambiguous. In the end, German policy influence in Iran in the Weimar period had been stronger than during the Nazi period; see Hirschfeld, 'German policy towards Iran', especially 134–6, on the anti-German attitudes of Iranian officials. At least two Iranian ministers, Ahmed Matin-Daftari (Minister of Justice since 1935) and Mahmoud Bader (Minister of Finance, 1937–9), were known to have pro-German sympathies, whereas many others were pro-British, most notably Mahmud Jam (Prime Minister and later Minister of Court) and Davar (Minister of Finance), or openly anti-German, like General Nakhjevan (Head of the Iranian Air Force and later Minister of War), General Khosrovi (General Manager of the Iranian National Bank and since 1939 Minister of Finance) and Ali Mansur (Prime Minister during the invasion of Iran in 1941).
101. Memorandum for Iranian Consulates and Embassies Abroad, Foreign Office (Document No. 41749), 3/10/1313 [1935], Tehran, National Archives of Iran (*Sazman-i Asnad-i Milli-yi Iran*) (NAI), Film 22–240, 21/6/214 (Archive No. 297036473).
102. Ibid.; references to and copies of further letters regarding the renaming, including a letter of Imperial Bank of Persia, informing its customers about the new name 'Imperial Bank of Iran' and debates about the promotion of the new name in the USA can be found in Muhsin Rusta'i, '*Rayzani-yi Iran-i asr-i Riza Shah darbarah-yi yak vazhah-yi tarikhi (Iran baja-yi Pars)*', in *Ganjinah-yi Asnad: Faslnamah-yi Tahqiqat-i Tarikhi*, 10(1 and 2) (Spring and Summer 1379/2000), 60–7.
103. Siad Baqir Kazimi to Iranian Embassies Abroad (Document No. 41797), 4/10/1313 [1935], Tehran, NAI, File 510006, Box 444 (Archive No. 297036473).
104. Klopp vom Hofe, '*Die Erneuerung Irans: Das Persien des Pahlevi-Zeitalters nennt sich wieder "Arierland"*', in *Völkischer Beobachter* (22 March 1935); for a similar view, see '*Ein Staat wird umbenannt: Persien nennt sich jetzt: Iranien*', in *Angriff*, 9 (11 January 1935); a collection of German press articles on the renaming and the politics of national renewal in Iran can be found in the *Reichslandbund Press Archive*, BA, R8034 II/8152; see also Karl Haushofer, '*Iran statt Persien!*' in *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, 12(3) (1935), 158–60.

105. Wipert von Blücher, *Zeitenwende im Iran* (Birbach R., 1949), 323–4.
106. See, for instance, documents in file PA, R99173.
107. Internal Note (Foreign Office), 30 August 1935, Berlin, PA, R99182; see also Hirschfeld, 'German policy towards Iran', 125.
108. '*Les Turcs promus "aryens"*', in *Le Temps* (14 June 1936); on the wave of protests it sparked, see files in R99173.
109. On the inclusion of Turkey on 30 April 1936, see the documents in file R99173; specifically Hinrichs (Foreign Office) to all ministries and Reich Chancellery, 30 March 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173; Gross (NSDAP Race Office) to Foreign Office, 28 April 1937, Berlin, PA, R99182.
110. Ibid.; see specifically in the case of Iran: Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office) to German Embassy Tehran, 18 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173.
111. Keller (German Embassy Turkey) to Foreign Office, 19 June 1936, Tarabya, PA, R99173. The Iranian ambassador had learned about the news through a local newspaper article: '*Une circulaire recue par l'Ambassade d'Allemagne*', in *République* (15 June 1936).
112. Internal Note by Pilger (Foreign Office), 16 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173; Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office) to German Embassy Tehran, 18 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173; Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office) to various German Ministries, 20 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173.
113. Internal Note (Foreign Office), n.d. [August 1936], Berlin, PA, R104782.
114. Smend (German Embassy Tehran) to Foreign Office Berlin, 19 June 1936, Tehran, PA, R99173. About irritations in Tehran: Internal Note Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office), 22 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173. German accounts suggest that among Iranians in the 1930s there was widespread popular belief in an Aryan kinship between Germans and Iranians. According to German memoirs and travel accounts, some Iranians even claimed that Germans originated from the eastern Iranian province Kerman; see Edmund Jaroljmek, *Ich lebte in Nah-Ost: Buntes Morgenland zwischen einst und jetzt* (Vienna, 1942), 263; and Blücher, *Zeitenwende*, 324.
115. About Berlin's reaction, see Internal Report by Pilger (Foreign Office), 16 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173, and Internal Note Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office), 22 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173; about the German reaction in Turkey, see Von Keller (German Embassy Turkey) to Foreign Office, 19 June 1936, Tarabya, PA, R99173.
116. Note for the Press (Foreign Office), 16 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173; see also Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office) to German Embassies in Egypt, Iraq and Iran, 18 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99174. *Le Temps* reported about the German statement a few days later; see note in *Le Temps* (24 June 1936) and '*"Aryens" et non "aryens"*', in *Le Temps* (28 June 1936).
117. Minutes by Hinrichs, Berlin, 2 July 1936, PA, R99174; see also Invitation by Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office), 26 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99174.
118. Hinrichs (Foreign Office) to Embassy Tehran, 11 July 1936, Berlin, PA, R99174.
119. Ibid.; see also Internal Note by Bülow-Schwante (Foreign Office), 22 June 1936, Berlin, PA, R99173. The Iranian ambassador's dispatches also calmed sentiments in Tehran; see Smend (German Embassy Tehran) to Foreign Office Berlin, 18 July 1936, Tehran, PA, R99174.

120. For a definite statement, see Gross (NSDAP Race Office) to Foreign Office, 28 April 1937, Berlin, PA, R99182. The history of the debate between Germans and Iranians about the official racial categorisations of Iranians has often been written inaccurately or incorrectly; see, for instance, Matthias Küntzel, *Die Deutschen und der Iran: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer verhängnisvollen Freundschaft* (Berlin, 2009), 51; Madani, *Iranische Politik*, 25–32; Miron Rezun, *The Iranian Crisis of 1941: The Actors Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union* (Cologne, 1982), 28; Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (London, 1979), 316; Lenczowski, *Russia and the West*, 160.

9

History and its meaning in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The case of the Mongol invasion(s) and rule

Anja Pistor-Hatam

Introduction

In his book *Dar khedmat va khiyānat-e roushanfekrān* (On the Service and Treason of the Intellectuals), Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–69) asks whether it was not about time to assess the Mongol invasion of Iran anew. Why should Iranians, 800 years after this event, still mourn it and make it responsible for every kind of destruction and decline in their country?[1] Many years later, when Iran had become an Islamic republic, the Iranian-born American publisher Ahmad Jabbari, president of Mazda Publishers, sent an email to the Adabiyat news group. In this message, dispatched on 27 May 2003, Jabbari refers to an exhibition called 'The Legacy of Genghis Khan. Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353',[2] held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in succession from November 2002 to July 2003. In response to the exhibition's heading, Jabbari writes:

> The invasion of Iran in [the] thirteenth century by the three sons of Genghis Khan [sic] was brutal. Nearly three million perished in an act of genocide that finds its parallels only in the extermination of Jews and the Armenians in the twentieth century. Given that the Genghis invasion disrupted all kinds of production for nearly three decades and that, the art that followed was wholly that of the Iranian phoenix rising from the ashes (rather than the contributions of its brutal nomadic invaders), we find the title of this exhibition least appropriate and troubling. An analogy that may best explain the displeasure of the Iranian community with this title would be to name Jewish art following Hitler's atrocities as 'The Legacy of Hitler'.

This announcement by Jabbari is, of course, very provocative to say the least. First, his analogies do raise many questions concerning the definition of 'genocide' in

general, and of the Holocaust in particular, as well as the interrelation of war and genocide all through history.[3] Although the Mongol conquests have been described as 'genocidal war[s]',[4] the question remains how we define 'genocide'; or' rather, which of the many political and scholarly definitions proposed since the coinage of the term by Raphael Lemkin (1900–59) and its incorporation and definition in Article II of the UN Convention of 1948 one takes as a basis.[5] Second, the curators of the exhibition, Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, were certainly not the first scholars to speak of a 'legacy' of the Mongols.[6] Third, Āl-e Ahmad's declaration cited above had apparently been ignored if 'the Iranian community', as Jabbari claims, was still troubled by an exhibition called 'The Legacy of Genghis Khan' in 2003.

The statement made by Jabbari raises numerous questions. Is it true that Iranians – in our perspective meaning the inhabitants of the Islamic Republic of Iran – nowadays still equate the Mongol invasion and its aftermath (that is, the reign of the Ilkhanids in Iran) merely with devastation, atrocious cruelty and genocide? Has this epoch really left 'permanent scars' as J. A. Boyle claims in an article published in the *Cambridge History of Iran*?[7] In her 2007 book on Genghis Khan, Michal Biran contests Muslim authors who 'treat the Mongols like an apocalyptic whirlwind of destruction, descending from nowhere and leaving swathes of wasteland behind'.[8] Even though the extent of their devastations was enormous and the loss of life was 'on an unparalleled scale',[9] there was still a strategy behind their 'pragmatic cruelty',[10] Biran says. In addition, one has to be aware that after the conquering came the revival and the reconstruction necessary for the consolidation of an empire.

Yet if we assume that in contemporary Iran, even scholars do primarily envisage the Mongols as barbaric and brutal invaders who lay waste to the Iranian plateau, its thriving cities and blossoming culture, do they also equate 'Iran' – whatever this notion may imply – with 'a phoenix from the ashes', rising anew after each devastation? In addition, what are the other or competing central ideas in the current Persian narratives concerning the Mongol invasion and rule?

Dealing with current narratives of Mongol history in Iran, one has to consider a number of contextual issues. Closely connected with these narratives and their perceptions of the Mongols is Iranian nationalism, which emerged during the Constitutional Revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century. Against all odds, Iranian nationalism as the Pahlavi shahs fortified it seems to be still powerful in the Islamic Republic. Retrospectively, rulers of the Iranian plateau who did not belong to an 'Iranian culture' as it was constructed throughout the twentieth century came to be regarded as 'foreign'. In recently published articles by Iranian authors, one comes across expressions like *bīgāne*, 'foreign', or *hākemīyat-e bīgāne*, 'foreign rule'. Working with and translating such terms, it has to be considered that the English 'foreign rule' was originally translated

from the German word *Fremdherrschaft*.[11] This latter term had been introduced following the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century. It was soon generally associated with such negative connoted concepts as 'bondage', 'oppression', 'arbitrariness' or 'exploitation'.[12] Consequently, in the case of 'foreign rule', nationalistic concepts recognise rulers and the ruled as a dichotomist pair[13] because they are perceived as belonging to different 'nations', 'peoples', 'ethnic groups', 'creeds' or – as is particularly important in the case of the Mongols – they are people with dissimilar ways of life, like nomadic and sedentary populations.

The genesis of nationalism is usually related closely to the coming into being of national history. National history, for its part, is strongly entwined with the construction of a national identity. Turning to modern history and the creation or imagining of a modern Iranian nation, the most important question to be asked is: what is the significance of the Mongol invasion concerning a modern Iranian identity and self-awareness? Directly linked to this question is a second one: why should the Mongol invasion be significant as to the meaning that Iranians gain from the creation of their history?[14]

By means of remembrance, history grows into myth. Thereby it does not become imaginary, but, on the contrary, initially develops into reality in the sense of an ongoing normative and formative power,[15] says the egyptologist Jan Assmann in his book *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (Cultural Memory). According to Assmann, history and myth are not antagonistic. Regardless of its fictionality or its factuality, the past becomes myth by way of its consolidation and internalisation as history.[16] Myth, as defined by Assmann, does not deny the authenticity of events. On the contrary, it accentuates their binding nature for the future.[17] The internalised past – that is, the past that is remembered – expresses itself in the form of the narrative. The past is never remembered for its own sake.[18] Instead, remembrance as an act of the endowing of meaning results in the fact that only the significant past will be remembered and that only the past that is remembered is significant.[19]

If past events are remembered because they are significant, the question comes to mind in which way they are significant. What kind of meaning do these past events have in regard to those who narrate them? In the introduction to his book *The Mind of Egypt. History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (2002), Assmann states:

> History is seen here above all in terms of the way changes, crises, and new departures reflect shifts in existing structures of meaning. Their sequence may indeed be understood as a 'development', but only as long as we resist seeing it simply as progress and decline – that is, as a one-way process heading straight for some ineluctable destination. If we discern coherence in this process, it is a coherence we owe to cultural memory and the way it contrives to take past meaning preserved in the written word and the pictoral image, reactivate it, and incorporate it into the semantic paradigms of the present. [...] History is a profoundly human affair: we produce it by producing

> meaning. A 'history of meaning' discusses history as a cultural form in which the course of events forms the backdrop and the discourses generating and reflecting meaning occupy the front of the stage.[20]

The meaningful structure of the world we live in, Assmann goes on, is made up of collective projections and fictions: 'Hence narration and the construction of fictions of coherence is not simply and solely the work of historians, but rather a necessary condition for any kind of historical awareness, any experience of history.'[21] Drawing on Assmann's idea of the history of meaning (*Sinngeschichte*),[22] this chapter will look into the way Iranian authors relate to the Mongol invasions and their rule, the way they construct meaning and fictions of coherence to incorporate the Mongol legacy into the Iranian past and present. Consequently, by using a hermeneutical approach,[23] the aim of this chapter is to bring out the 'fabrications, constructions, and projections – the fashioning of meaning'.[24] It concentrates on articles collected in the proceedings of two conferences published in Tehran in 2000–1. These conferences concerning the Mongol invasion of Iran took place at the Shahīd Beheshtī University in Tehran in 1996 and 1997, respectively. Three years later, the same university printed two volumes of proceedings entitled *Hodjūm-e moghūl be Īrān va pey-āmadhā-ye ān* (The Mogul [sic] Invasion and Aftermath).[25]

Like a phoenix from the ashes

The two volumes of The Mogul Invasion and Aftermath, as the English title of *Hodjūm-e moghūl be Īrān va pey-āmadhā-ye ān* is incorrectly given, contain a message of greeting by the then president of Shahīd Beheshtī University, Dr Hādī Nadīmī, whose profession is architecture. This is followed by a short preface written by Dr Allāhyār Hal 'atbarī, professor at the same university's history department with a PhD in the history of Islam. The two volumes of the proceedings include 58 articles, presented by scholars and PhD students alike. They deal with a range of subjects like architecture and urban development, trade, miniature painting, books and libraries, Mongolian rulers and their Iranian viziers, the religions of the Mongols, the Khvarazmshahs and the events at Otrār, poetry, Mongolian tents, literature, European travelogues, metallurgy or Mongolian foreign policy. The study presented here focuses on those articles or parts of articles that concentrate on the historical and political aspects of the Mongol invasion under Genghis Khan and Mongol rule under the Ilkhanids; the reasons that are given for the invasion; and how the situation in Iran after the invasions and the way it affected the people and the land of 'Iran' are described.

As a preliminary remark it has to be stated that neither in the proceedings nor in most of the bulk of the literature on the Mongols in Iran consulted so far is

the territory of 'Iran' of this time defined, let alone any kind of real or imagined political Iranian unity. Keeping in mind that a political and territorial concept of 'Iran' had vanished entirely after the Muslim conquest in the middle of the seventh century AD, one cannot be sure where to put the borders of this presumed territorial or political entity non-existent before the establishment of the Mongol *ulus* and, later, the state of the Ilkhanids.[26] The notion of 'Iran' as a 'territory, which pertained to generations of Iranians' who 'claimed territorial ownership'[27] evolved at the end of the nineteenth century and is still influential today. However, if used for pre-Mongolian times, this concept is misleading. Therefore, 'Iran' in the time of Mongolian rule shall be confined to the region of 'Greater Iran' – that is, the territories of modern Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

According to many authors writing through the ages, the Mongol invasion was a traumatic experience for the conquered peoples of the Iranian plateau. As stated above, this invasion has recently been equalled in its terrible consequences, as well as in the exact number of those killed, with the barbarous and well-organised annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany. Leaving aside the questions of whether the number of those killed by the Mongols has been exaggerated and whether the sources tell us anything at all about 'what really happened', this section will concentrate on the significance of the Mongol invasion with regard to the meaning of this invasion considering the construction of Iranian history and, of course, identity.

Pre-modern Muslim historians tried to explain why 'unbelievers' from the steppes outside of the Muslim realm were able to conquer Muslim lands and rule over its Eastern parts at all. Due to the fright and horror inflicted upon them by their defeat at the hands of the Mongols, the authors of Muslim sources often overestimate the numbers of those killed by the Mongol invasion. To justify this terrifying occasion as part of their own salvation history, Shi'ite authors writing in the centuries after the incidence often refer to Alī b. Abī Tālib. He is believed to have predicted the destruction of sinful Baghdad and the termination of the usurpatory Abbasid Dynasty by horsemen from the steppe in an apocalyptic divination.[28] The wrong done to the (as Shi'ites see it) legitimate successor of the prophet and his family had finally been reciprocated. Consequently, the Mongols were just the divine tools of an overdue penalisation.[29] We may therefore conclude that Shi'ite historians of the middle period tried to give a meaning to the Mongol invasion of most of the Abbasid Empire, the destruction of Baghdad and the killing of the caliph by integrating it into Shi'ite salvation history. Most of these authors, however, wrote in Arabic and lived outside the Mongol Empire. Iranian historians writing under Mongol rule and for their Mongol sovereigns had a more difficult task to accomplish. Whereas Atā Malek Djoveynī, who witnessed the second Mongol invasion personally, found himself in the difficult situation of having to justify 'as much to himself as to his readers, the terrible calamities that

had overtaken Islam',[30] Rashīd od-Dīn lived in a time of well-established Mongol rule. Although, just as Djoveynī, he could not represent the Mongol invasion and their rule simply as beneficial, he heavily relied on Ghāzān Khān, a convert to Islam. According to Rashīd od-Dīn, Ghāzān Khān or Soltān Mahmūd, the *pādeshāh-e eslām* 'was the apotheosis and justification of Mongol rule, a great monarch who had brought Persia back into the Muslim fold and who had set himself to reform abuses from humanitarian as well as pragmatic motives'.[31] Even if the Mongol conquest in itself had been horrifying for the conquered peoples, something good had at last come out of it: a just Muslim ruler.

Yet at least the presentation of the Mongol invasion as part of Muslim salvation history is lacking in the proceedings' articles. Instead, various historical and political reasons are discussed that may have led to the raid by Genghis Khan and his troops. Relying on historians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, some of the contributors mention internal political rivalries between the Khvārazm Shāh Soltān Alā od-Dīn Mohammad, on the one hand, and his mother and her followers, on the other. One of them quotes Will and Ariel Durant's statement that 'a great civilisation is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself from within'.[32] Already enfeebled by Saldjukid rule, Iran, and particularly Persian scholarship, was made completely powerless by the Mongol invasion.[33] Another argument frequently brought forward states that the moral condition in Iran had been weakened long before by luxury, differences of opinion and conflicts between various sects, corruption, depravity and sexual offence. When the Mongol 'unbelievers', a people of brutal nature (*derande-khū*), vindictive (*kīne-djū*) and bloodthirsty (*khūn-khvār*), finally attacked, they did not encounter strong resistance.[34] Overall, it was due to the arrogance and stubbornness of the Khvarazm shahs as well as the fanaticism (*ta'assob*) of the common people that the Mongols were able to set foot on Iranian soil at all.[35] Nevertheless, the increase of flattery (*tamallogh*) and hypocrisy (*tazvīr*) that had taken place before the Mongol invasion damaged Iran to such an extent, summarises one author, that its influence is still visible in the warp and woof (*tār-o pūd*) of its people's lives.[36]

Searching for reasons to explain the Mongol victory, the enmity between the Khvarazm Shah and the Abbasid caliph is equally seen as having resulted in a weakening of the political situation in Iran, causing the Abbasids to provoke the Mongols to invade.[37] According to the historians of the time and to some of the contributors cited here, Soltān Mohammad of Khvarazm was the actual culprit responsible for the Mongol invasion. When he ordered a group of merchants coming from the Mongol Empire to be killed in Otrār in 1218, this was the pretence the Mongols had waited for to invade Iran. Other scholars, however, point to the fact that the Mongols had made their plans already, because nomads always invaded the territory of weaker neighbours. Furthermore, the Mongols had wanted to control the important trade routes leading from their territories to

the Mediterranean and to Europe, at any rate.[38] Nevertheless, Soltān Mohammad Shāh is repeatedly accused of having been politically naive. On the one hand, he did not realise how powerful and dangerous his neighbours to the east had become when he expanded his realm that way. On the other hand, he provoked the Abbasid caliph when he sent his armies westward and by revoking his loyalty.[39] As far as the end of Abbasid rule is concerned, at least in one of the articles, this is estimated in a nationalistic sense. Since, as the author says, the Abbasids inhibited Iranian liberation movements as well as Iranian unity, their subjugation by Hülegü and his allies could be regarded as a chance. This author, it may be pointed out here, is in accordance with Jalal Al-e Ahmad's reading of Hülegü's invasion.[40]

In spite of the disastrous effects and the incomparableness of the Mongol invasion claimed by some of the authors cited here, others perceive the Mongol assault as one of many such incursions, albeit the most disastrous one, into Iranian territory. Alexander the Great, followed by the Muslim Arabs and then the Mongols, led the first of these raids[41] – others also name the Ghaznavids, Saldjukids and other Turkic peoples.[42] Iranians accepted Arab rule because the Arabs came as the heralds (*payām-āwarān*) of Islam, preaching brotherhood, equality and justice. Yet they refused to accept the sovereignty of arrogant (*khvod-kāme*) and racist (*nejād-gerāyān*) Arabs (*tāzīyān*). The Saldjukid invasion (*tork-tāzī*), for its part, turned into a long-lasting reign because the Saldjukids protected the Abbasid caliph and Sunni Islam. However, members of the Iranian elite later administrated much of the territory conquered by the Saldjukids.[43] The Arab invaders are blamed for bringing their tribal rivalries to Iran. Shortly after their conquest, Islamic ideals were replaced by tribal feuds and Arab control over Iranians. In addition, the clashes and debates of different religious schools, theological groups, Shi'ite revolts, Ismaili missions and so on instigated wars between provinces, which penetrated into the cities, and towns, causing internal fighting as a result.[44] Chaos prevailed and the people became used to the fact that they belonged neither to one religion (*dīn*) nor to one homeland (*mīhan*).[45]

In an article that compares the situation of the main towns in Khorasan before and after the Mongol conquest, a closer look is shed on Bukhara. Before the Muslim conquest, the town is said to have been one of the main cultural centres of Iran. When Bukhara was invaded by the Umayyad ruler Mu'āwīya's (r. 661–80) army commander 'Ubaidullāh b. Ziyād, many people were killed and large numbers of the male population were enslaved. After the town had prospered again in Islamic times – mainly during the Samanid period – the Mongols captured it in 1220. Libraries were burnt, the city was set on fire and a large part of its population was carried off to Samarkand.[46]

Iranians are also purported to have found a subversive way of resisting their new masters. In the case of the Umayyads and Abbasids as well as the Mongols, they used their influence at the court and elsewhere to give the Arabic and the

Mongol usurpers their own 'Iranian complexion' (*rang-e īrānī*). As in Rashīd od-Dīn's famous history of the Mongols, Ghāzān Khān is often cited as a just ruler, having been, of course, influenced by Islam and his Iranian advisors. Accordingly, although the Mongol invasion proved to be disastrous, the Ilkhanids' Iranian viziers tried to rebuild their realm. In a time when the destructions were visible everywhere, says one contributor, Rashīd od-Dīn proved to be a considerate and refined cultivator (*ābād-konande'ī*).[47] Most of all, he cared for the welfare of the people, and tried to reduce poverty that was caused by unjust rule. At a time when deceit was the order of the day at the sovereign court, Rashīd od-Dīn showed nothing but sincerity (*sadāqat*), purity (*ekhlās*) and modesty (*hosn-e 'amal*), while devoting himself to the history of his people (*mellat*) and his fatherland (*mīhan*).[48] When Ghāzān Khān converted to Islam, a new era began in Iran. The 'Iranian religion [!] and language' (*dīn-o zabān-e īrānī*) were made official, causing an era of rejuvenation of Iranian culture.[49] As far as this contributor is concerned, the Mongols finally capitulated in the face of a more powerful civilisation, leaving their Mongolian heritage to turn to the ancient Iranian culture.[50] While the Mongol invasion has to be regarded as a profound rupture in Iran, its particular national culture and civilisation (*farhang-o tamaddon-e mellī-ye Īrān*) could not be destroyed.[51] On the contrary, when the dust of slaughtering and destruction had finally settled, defeated Iran once more gained the upper hand on the cultural field. Like other conquerors before them, the Mongols gradually turned into Iranians. They earned Iranian honour and ambition, and tried to link themselves and their ancestors to the glorious Iranian past.[52]

If we take a look at the history of this region [that is, Iran], we witness procedures each of which accounts for the destruction of a powerful civilisation (*tamaddon-e kāfī*). Nevertheless, this ancient land (*sarzamīn-e kohan*) has endured thousands of invasions, aggressions and assaults by various peoples. Each time it seemed that its name would be extinguished. Yet, like a phoenix rising from the ashes (*qoqnūs az khākestar*), Iran arises again to superior heights, more adamant and enduring than ever before. She keeps upright and resumes her life.'[53]

In order to be able to rise to new heights after the Mongol invasion, Iranian customs and civilisation had to survive in secure havens like the southern province of Fars, Asia Minor and Sind in India. Many poets of Persian literature fled to these hideouts and took not only their own poetry, but also Persian poetry, with them. Iran, it is stated, possessed an inner strength protecting Iranian art and culture against its obliteration. Some of the contributors refute that important changes in the arts and handicrafts of Iran were brought about by Mongol rule and, very importantly in this regard, through Chinese artistic impact. Contrary to what the curators of the exhibition on Genghis Khan and the Ilkhanids describe as their 'legacy', and in agreement with the above-quoted Ahmad Jabbari, these scholars can only detect an extrinsic Mongolian influence on Iranian arts. In fact,

as one article mentions, the true changes in artistic expressions evolved from an innate Iranian art: 'There has always been an inner power (nīrū'ī darūnī) that protected and defended our arts and saved Iranian culture from destruction and extinction.'[54]

There is also one article trying to explain the subjection of the peoples on the Iranian plateau in psychological terms relating to Mongol psychological warfare – their 'pragmatic cruelty' as Michal Biran calls it. When the Mongol invasion under Genghis Khan began in 1219, Soltān Mohammad Shāh is said to have been overwhelmed by fear.[55] Dread, the same author writes, led the people of Khvarazm to irrational actions and superstition. In this way, they lost their power of reason, their determination and even the possibility of showing any reaction at all.[56] Because Genghis Khan and the Mongols were attributed with divine features and believed to be God's own soldiers, people were terrified.[57] In conclusion, states the same author, it was not least fear and the belief in the supernatural powers of the Mongols that led to the subjugation of Iranians. Ultimately, Iranians were conquered by their own ignorance regarding the true power and capability of the Mongols. Fear and terror were constantly instilled into their hearts so that they could neither fight nor take flight.[58]

In connection with the Mongol invasion and, later, the rule of the Ilkhanids in Iran, trade is seen as an important issue. Nomads often controlled trade routes, says one author, these being important meeting places for the representatives of various cultures like the Chinese, Irano–Islamic, Russian, Indian or European cultures. Iranian advisors – even a woman is mentioned here – who went to the Mongol court in China made sure that trade prospered and that the Persian language and Islam spread out in this part of the world.[59] Even though the Mongols shattered large parts of Iran, they also made possible the spreading of Irano–Islamic culture to other regions. At the same time, Muslims became acquainted with the cultures, literatures and histories of China, India and the Mongols themselves.[60] One of the contributors even goes so far as to say that the two ancient civilisations (*tamaddon-e kohan*) of China and Iran created a wholly new culture.[61]

Conclusion

As mentioned above, it is not the intention of this chapter to contrast the image created of the Mongol invasion and its aftermath by the articles of Iranian scholars cited here with the findings and assessments of other researchers.[62] Rather, the intention is to find out what meaning these and other Iranian students of Iranian history gained by constructing this particular part of the history of the Iranian plateau. Although a well-known fact, we should remember that many non-Iranian scholars also participated in the construction of an image that presented the Mongols simply as the destroyers of the great Islamic civilisation of the middle

period.[63] So, for example, E. G. Browne 'saw in the Mongol invasion "a catastrophe which [...] changed the face of the world, set in motion forces which are still effective, and inflicted more suffering on the human race than any other event in the world's history of which records are preserved to us" '.[64] Many Iranian students of history used the different threads of the narratives of contemporary Iranian and Arab historians, as well as the findings of European and American scholars,[65] to weave their own tapestry. This tapestry shows an image of Iran as an eternal, homogeneous cultural entity[66] shaped by the Persian language and its literature, as well as a certain understanding of just, central rule. Additionally, the civilisation thus imagined is presented as having been an urban civilisation. Ignoring the large contingent of nomadic peoples living in Iran at least since the coming of the Saldjukids, a dichotomy is composed of an ancient Iranian urbanised civilisation with a highly developed culture on the one hand, and a barbaric, uncivilised, unrefined, ignorant, ungodly and bloodthirsty people from the steppe on the other hand. The 'other' is constructed as the absolute antonym of the 'self' when these attributes are applied. To be sure, not all of the contributors to the mentioned proceedings agree, but the overall impression given in the books is one of the construction of a 'self' and an antagonistic 'other' as I have just described. Despite frequent nomadic onslaughts, be they Arab, Mongol or otherwise, the allegedly urban civilisation of Iran has been indestructible. Moreover, 'Iran' seems to remain within the cultural hemisphere of the Near Eastern Islamic world, although its reintegration into the central Asian world and beyond by becoming part of the Mongol Empire can hardly be ignored.[67]

If, as Assmann claims, remembrance is an act of the endowment of meaning and only the past that is significant will be remembered, then we have to conclude that the Mongol period in Iranian history was significant and that it has been endowed with meaning. The writing of history is a profoundly political act. Those who are writing historical narratives, and who select past events to be remembered and told, usually have more in mind than just to convey 'what really happened'. Because nationalism has yet not been replaced by more powerful or more convincing ideologies, usually history is still written as national history. Therefore, it needs to have a meaning concerning the past and present of a 'nation'. Helping to create a 'national identity', historiography has to fulfil certain needs. Additionally, the functional dimension of the meaning of history implies that this same meaning is relevant for the individual's or the community's problems to adjust to the present[68] and its contingencies. An important functional dimension provided by the cited texts surely is the ostensible fact that however disastrous the invasions by 'uncivilised others' on Iranian soil may have been, the 'inner power' of 'Iranianness' could not and cannot be destroyed. On the contrary, the 'Iranian complexion' was donned on these 'others'[69]– these 'foreign rulers' and representatives of purportedly weaker civilisations. Also, the Mongols were allegedly only

able to conquer 'Iran' because its peoples were caught in internal political and tribal rivalries, moral decay and religious sectarianism, originally brought about by the Arab invaders some centuries earlier. These same Arabs incidentally also brought Islam, which, according to one of the authors cited here, simply became an 'Iranian religion'.

Although individual Iranian scholars working and writing in Pahlavi Iran as well as in the Islamic Republic did and do discuss the Mongols and their legacy from various perspectives, thereby trying to shape an unbiased image, the Mongols have frequently been reduced to an alien destructive force by historical narratives of the twentieth century. Many of the texts mentioned here corroborate the idea of a purportedly eternally existing and indestructible 'Iranianness' – this could be the basis of the past's fundamental consistency (*Fundament der Kontinuität*) making remembrance worthwhile.[70] In spite of the damage done to vast parts of Asia and Europe by the Mongol invaders, positive developments as, for example, in trade are equally described – here we find a possible driving force for progress (*Motor der Entwicklung*).[71]

What kind of meaning, then, do Iranians gain from the way the Mongol invasion has been interpreted? It seems that this meaning is strongly interwoven with the construction of a nationalist Iranian self to be observed since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 to 1911 and especially during the following era of the Pahlavis. The same 'barbaric and ungodly' Mongols who wrought havoc in Iran and elsewhere laid the foundation for a territorial unity constitutive for a sense of an Iranian self until this very day.[72] Apart from the assumption that at the time the Mongol invasion constituted a traumatic experience for its victims, there remains the question why it had to be remembered as such. Surely it is no accident that the way the Mongol invasion is described very much resembles the description of the Arab invasion. Iran, as it is collectively imagined in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is understood as a homogeneous entity in opposition to non-Persian nomadic invaders, whether Muslims or 'unbelievers'. Whatever their atrocities, be they the mass killings of human beings or the burning of precious libraries, the myth claiming that 'Iran' cannot be destroyed, but will always rise from the ashes, has to be repeated and remembered constantly. As one of the contributors to the mentioned proceedings emphasises, it belongs to the wonders of social life that the 'Iranian nation' (*mellat-e Īrān*) showed steadfastness when confronted with the Mongol invasion and in the face of a thousand years of foreign rule (*hākemīyat-e bīgāne*).[73] It would be interesting to find out, though, how much local history as it is remembered in various localities of Iran is commemorated differently from a unified national history.[74] Additionally, the question remains whether the Mongol invasions and rule were remembered in a certain way through the ages, or whether this part of Iranian history was only recently excavated again to serve special political and nationalistic needs.

Obviously, this creation of an indestructible Iranian self contrasts with historical reality. The Achaemenids were finally defeated by Alexander, the Sasanian Empire conquered by the Muslim Arabs, and the Khvarazm shahs and other rulers of thirteenth-century Iran were subdued by the Mongols. Although it never submitted to colonial status officially, modern Iran was divided into Russian and British spheres of influence and military dominance. This has been followed by American supremacy and open threats of invasion today. It may well be that the image created by modern Iranian scholars is the only way to depict a strong self – that is, an Iranian national entity – which in the face of predominant aggressors may always rely on its eternal cultural heritage, an ontological nucleus that never has been and never will be fissioned.

Let us finally return to the statements made by Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ahmad Jabbari, the two authors who referred to the Mongols in opposite ways. Considering the central ideas brought forward in the mentioned proceedings published by Shahīd Beheshtī University, we may conclude that there are, at least among the scholars cited here, Iranians who still mourn the Mongol invasion of Iran and make it responsible for destruction and decline in their country. And yes, some of these scholars believe that there exists an Iranian phoenix rising from the ashes which is solely responsible for the persistent existence of an 'Irano–Islamic culture'. Taking the same line as Ahmad Jabbari, the then president of Shahīd Beheshtī University, Hādī Nadīmī, even goes so far as to equate the number of people killed by the Mongols with the number of Jews murdered in Europe during the Holocaust. Nevertheless, other contributors to the publication under consideration here concentrate on issues like the expansion of trade or the spreading of the Irano– Islamic culture as far as China. In response to Ahmad Jabbari's assertion that 'the Iranian community' was displeased with an exhibition bearing the title 'The Legacy of Genghis Khan', it may be concluded that at least part of its scholarly community in Iran is in agreement with the international community of scholars engaged in Iranian history that there certainly exists a Mongol legacy in Iran and beyond.

Notes

1. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Dar khedmat va khiyānat-e roushanfekrān* (Tehran, 1372sh/1993), 186–93.
2. Linda Kamaroff and Stefano Carboni (eds), *The Legacy of Genghis Khan. Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (New York, 2002).
3. Some scholars have used the term 'holocaust' before to describe the Mongol invasions. Yet they used the term in a more general sense and did not directly compare the Mongol onslaught with the atrocities of Nazi Germany. See, for example, *Ira Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge, 2002), 226.

4. Adam Jones, *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction* (Oxford and New York, 2006), 51.
5. Ibid., 10–22.
6. See, for example, Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David Morgan (eds), *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy* (Leiden *et al.*, 1999).
7. J. A. Boyle, 'The socio-economic condition of Iran under the Īl-Khāns', in J. A. Boyle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. V: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods* (Cambridge, 1968), 483–537, 556.
8. Michal Biran, *Chinggis Khan* (Oxford, 2007), 63.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 64.
11. Christian Koller, *Fremdherrschaft. Ein politischer Kampfbegriff im Zeitalter des Nationalismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 13.
12. Ibid., 18.
13. Ibid., 38.
14. For the 'meaning of history', see Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt. History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (New York, 2002), especially the introduction.
15. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: C. H. Beck, 1992), 52. (All translations from German and Persian are mine.)
16. Assmann, *Gedächtnis*, 72.
17. Ibid., 77.
18. Ibid., 75.
19. Ibid., 77.
20. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt*, viii.
21. Ibid., 7–8.
22. The German title of Assmann's book is *Ägypten. Eine Sinngeschichte*. *Sinngeschichte* has here been translated into English as 'history and meaning' instead of 'the meaning of history'. If I understand it correctly, this translation tries to reflect that *Sinngeschichte* does not repeat the notion of *der Sinn der Geschichte* – that is, the (singular) meaning (or sense) of history as it was discussed in Germany since the nineteenth century, but instead focuses on the meaning given to history by those who try to interpret it. For further discussion see some of the articles presented in Jörn Rüsen (ed.), *Meaning and Representation in History* (New York and Oxford, 2006).
23. I will use the definition suggested by Jörn Rüsen: '[...] I follow the hermeneutical rule first of all to take the view of the author in order to understand him as he sees himself, and then to be able to criticise him from there instead of applying a standard which would be alien to him.' ('*[...] ich folge der hermeneutischen Regel, mich zunächst auf den Standpunkt des Autors selbst zu stellen, ihn aus dem Horizont seines Selbstverständnisses heraus zu verstehen und ihn von daher zu kritisieren und nicht mit einem Maßstab zu messen, der ihm fremd ist.*') Jörn Rüsen, *Zerbrechende Zeit. Über den Sinn der Geschichte* (Köln, 2001), 265.
24. Ibid., 8.
25. The conference proceedings analysed here are only one of a not very large number of publications on the Mongols in Iran since 1979. In regard to the perception of

Mongol rule in modern Iran, further research will include more texts in order to see if the findings presented here can be generalised.

26. The first scholar to point out this fact seems to have been Dorothea Krawulski, '*Zur Wiederbelebung des Begriffs "Iran" zur Ilkhânzeit*', in Dorothea Krawulski, *Mongolen und Ilkhâne. Ideologie und Geschichte* (Beirut, 1989), 113–30. See also Bert G. Fragner, 'Iran under Ilkhanid rule in a world history perspective', in Denise Aigle (ed.), *L'Iran face à la domination mongole. Etudes réunies et présentées par Denise Aigle* (Tehran, 1997), 121–31, 127–9; Bert G. Fragner, '*Die Mongolen und ihr Imperium*', in Bert G. Fragner and Andreas Kappeler (eds), *Zentralasien 13. bis 20. Jahrhundert. Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (Wien, 2006), 103–19, 114. Some non-Iranian researchers even claim that Shi'ism was established as a 'national religion' due to the conversion of Öldjeytü to Twelver Shi'ism. Charles Melville, 'The Mongols in Iran', in Linda Kamaroff and Stefano Carboni (eds), *The Legacy of Genghis Khan. Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (New York, 2002), 37–61, 58, referring to Bausani, Calmard and Pfeiffer.
27. Kashani-Sabet, *Firoozeh: Frontier Fictions. Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton, 1999), 132.
28. Heinz Halm, *Die Schia* (Darmstadt, 1988), 79. R. Strothmann, *Die Zwölfer-Schi'a. Zwei religionsgeschichtliche Charakterbilder aus der Mongolenzeit* (Leipzig, 1926), 44.
29. Strothmann (1926), 45–6.
30. J. A. Boyle, 'Juvayni and Rashid al-Din as sources on the history of the Mongols', in Bernard Lewis and Peter M. Holt (eds), *Historians of the Middle East* (London *et al.*, 1962), 133–7, 133.
31. David Morgan, 'Rašid al-Din and Gazan Khan', in Denise Aigle (ed.), *L'Iran face à la domination mongole. Etudes réunies et présentées par Denise Aigle* (Tehran, 1997), 179–88, 186.
32. Seyyed 'Ali Mohammad Sadjdjādi, '*Balā-ye yazdān yā khatā-ye soltān*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl be Īrān va pey-āmadhā-ye ān* (The Mogul [sic] Invasion and [Its] Aftermath, 2 vols) (Dāneshgāh-e Shahīd-e Beheshti, Tehran, 1379sh (2000/1)), vol. II, 701–11, 701. The original version of the quotation is to be found in Will Durant and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilisation*, 11 vols (New York, 1935–75), vol. 3, 776.
33. Farid Qāsemlū, '*Negareshī bar asar-e hamle-ye moghūl dar taghyīr-e mobādī-ye 'elmī-ye Īrān*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 883–905, 892–3.
34. Nūr Allāh Kasā'ī, '*Sar-gozasht-e dāneshmandān-o marākez-e dānesh dar hamle-ye moghūl*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 955–97, 956–7.
35. Kasā'ī, *Sar-gozasht*, 990.
36. Seyyed Ebrāhim Foyūzāt, '*Tahavvol-e farhangī dar 'asr-e moghūl*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 871–81, 879.
37. Hosein Ālyārī, '*Chengīz-o 'Alā' od-Dīn Mohammad Khvārazmshāh*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. I, 41–51; Mahbūbe Sharafī, "*Ellal-e tahādjom-e moghūlān-o naqsh-e khalīfe-ye 'abbāsī dar īn tahādjom*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 765–92, 781–6.
38. Sharafi, *'Ellal-e tahādjom*, p. 778; Seyyed 'Abbās Razavī, '*'Ellal-e tahādjom-e moghūlān be-Īrān*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, 639–52, p. 650.
39. Kasā'ī, *Sar-gozasht*, 960. In contemporary Arabic sources, Soltān Mohammad Shāh is equally described as the mainly responsible person. Cf. Biran: *Chinggis Khan*, S. 112.

40. See this author's 'Writing back? Ğalāl Āl-e Aḥmad's (1923–69) reflections on selected periods of Iranian history', in *Iranian Studies*, 40 (2007), 559–78, see especially 564–6.
41. Dāvod Esfahāniyān, '*Ta'sīr-e īlghār-e moghūl dar masīr-e tārīkh-e Īrān*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. I, 71–80, 71.
42. Šarafi, *'Ellal-e tahādjom*, 777.
43. Kasā'ī, *Sar-gozasht*, 955–6.
44. Ibid., 959.
45. Ibid., 960.
46. Mohammad Fārūq Shādorvān, '*Maqāyese-ye ouzā'-e shahrhā-ye khvorāsān dar qabl-o ba'd az hamle-ye moghūl*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. 2, 815–37, 819–22.
47. Rezā Sha'bānī, '*As'ale-o adjvābe-ye Rashīdī*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 803–14.
48. Sha'bānī, *As'ale*, 805.
49. Foyūzāt, *Tahavvol-e farhangī*, 876.
50. Ibid., 877.
51. Ibid., 879.
52. Kasā'ī, *Sar-gozasht*, 990.
53. Esfandyār Āhandjīdeh, '*Degargūnīhā-ye monāsebāt-e arzī-o māliyātī dar 'asr-e moghūlān*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. I, 53–70, 53.
54. Mansūreh Sābetzādeh, '*Dezh-e honar dar taqābel-e moghūl*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. I, 381–94, 382.
55. Mohammad Salmāsīzāde, '*Homā-ye eqbāl-o sedā-ye edbār*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 724–44, 732–3.
56. Salmāsīzāde, *Homā-ye eqbāl*, 735.
57. Ibid., 741–3.
58. Ibid., 744.
59. Mas'ūd Sharqī, '*Tedjārat dar 'ahd-e īlkhānān-e moghūl*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 793–801, 793–5.
60. Mahmūd Fazīlat, '*Yūresh-e moghūl be-Īrān va bāz-tāb-e ān dar zabān-o adabiyāt-e fārsī*', in *Hodjūm-e moghūl*, vol. II, 839–69, 859.
61. Foyūzāt, *Tahavvol-e farhangī*, 875.
62. Of course, as scholars we also need a 'scientific image of the past' – that is, a '*Realgeschichte*' – in order to understand in which way meaning was attributed to history retrospectively. Gerhard Kaiser, '*War der Exodus ein Sündenfall*', in Jan Assmann, *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung oder der Preis des Monotheismus* (München and Wien, 2003), 239–71, 243.
63. See, for example, Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History: Ideas, Men and Events in the Middle East* (London 1973), 179.
64. Quoted from ibid., 180. Obviously, Browne did not take into consideration that brutal manslaughter – be it in the wake of war or otherwise – seems to be part of man's characteristic behaviour as to be witnessed throughout known history.
65. Hardly any works published after 1979 in languages other than Persian have been used by the authors quoted here.
66. Sivan describes three centres of national memory, among them the nation as 'eternal entity on inviolable national territory'. Emmanuel Sivan, '*Symbols et rituels arabes*', *Annales ESC 4* (1990), no. 4, 1005–17, quoted from Jocelyn Dakhlia, 'New

approaches in the history of memory? A French model', in Angelika Neuwirth and Andreas Pflitsch (eds), *Crisis and Memory in Islamic Societies. Proceedings of the Third Summer Academy of the Working Group Modernity and Islam held at the Orient Institute of the German Oriental Society in Beirut* (Würzburg, 2001), 59–74, 60.

67. Fragner, *Iran under Ilkhanid Rule*, 121–31; see also Melville, The *Mongols in Iran*, 43.
68. Regarding the functional dimensions of historic meaning, see Rüsen, *Zerbrechende Zeit*, 36.
69. Apparently, a way for the Mongols to connect themselves to pre-Islamic Iranian history was to have the kings and heroes of the *Shahnameh* depicted in Mongolian clothes. See Biran, *Chinggis Khan*, 100.
70. Assmann, *Gedächtnis*, 75 (*Vergangenheit als 'Fundament der Kontinuität'*).
71. Ibid. (*Vergangenheit als 'Motor der Entwicklung'*).
72. Fragner, *Die Mongolen und ihr Imperium*, 114.
73. Foyūzāt, *Tahavvol-e farhangī*, 880.
74. See, for example, Dakhlia 2001, 61, discussing Pierre Nora's concept of the 'state-centered nation', and Paul pointing to the fact that on a local level ordinary people in Iran fought for their own communities, not for any kind of national entity: '*la loyauté du petit peuple s'adresse à des unités de petite taille*'. Jürgen Paul, '*L'invasion mongole comme "révélateur" de la société iranienne*', in Aigle, 1997, 37–53, 49.

10

Safavid Persia through Italian eyes: From reign of freedom to land of oppression

Elisa Sabadini

Italian voyagers who travelled through Persian lands during the two centuries of Safavid domination variously describe the country they discovered, and express different judgments in their written works about Persia and the Persians. In this way, they contributed to construct and diffuse among coeval Italian readers a specific image of the country, which would play a significant role in the subsequent elaboration of commonplaces and stereotype.

The perspective is that of perception, considering travel writings as sources to better understand travellers' imagery, their biases and prejudices.[1]

For this reason I have chosen to consider texts concerning voyages taken during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, which were also published within the centuries or in the immediate aftermath, and which had a wide-circulation among Italian readers.[2] Those texts, due to their widespread readership, would have significantly influenced the contemporaries and contributed to the creation of an imagery of the country. It is not so important, in this context, to establish whether the travellers' tales refer to a wholly real experience or only to a partially real one, and if the accounts are original or take pieces from predecessors. Plagiarism phenomena, so common in early modern travel writings, suggest that later travellers felt that those particular images, judgments or sentiments were still in tune with their own.[3]

The Italian travellers that visited Persia in the early modern age and wrote about it were few: apart from diplomats and missionaries, they seemed to prefer other destinations in the East. In fact, the Italians directed themselves mainly towards India and the South-Eastern islands in the sixteenth century,[4] while they preferred the Turkish domain, Constantinople and Egypt during the seventeenth century.[5] Pilgrimages to the Holy Land, as well as the eastern Mediterranean (Lebanon and Syria), continued to attract Italian voyagers during the whole period.[6]

The Italians travelling to Persia in the sixteenth century were mainly merchants. However, the typology of the seventeenth-century traveller was entirely different. They were almost all members of the high nobility such as the Roman Pietro Della Valle[7] and the Venetian Ambrosio Bembo,[8] or at least they belonged to the aristocracy of professions: Angelo Legrenzi[9] was a physician, while Francesco Gemelli Careri[10] was a magistrate of the Kingdom of Naples. They were *viaggiatori curiosi*, which means that they had some wealth and travelled in order to satisfy their curiosity, spurred by the desire to see and know foreign countries, to prove their values, especially in the cultural field, and to create a reputation for themselves.[11]

Persia did not seem to be a self-sufficient destination for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian travellers. For them the Persian sojourn was only a part of a wider voyage, where India or the Far East represented the main destination. Angelo Legrenzi, to give an example, travelled in the East between 1671 and 1694. He left Venice with the newly elected consul of Syria, Marco Bembo, and reached Aleppo where he held the position of Venetian consulate's doctor. In 1678 he left the city and went on an Eastern voyage. He passed through Persia and reached India, where he remained between December 1678 and February 1680. In the same year, he returned to Aleppo, where he worked for 14 years as a physician, under the protection of the English authorities. He finally came back to Venice in 1694. Despite his longer sojourn in the Ottoman Empire, Legrenzi's account shows a wider interest in the Indian world, which comes out in particular in his natural descriptions and in his generally more positive attitude towards this reality. The same goes for Ambrogio Bembo.[12] Although China was the intended destination of Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, he then extended his itinerary to include the whole world. The magistrate left Italy in 1693. He sailed to Egypt and, after having seen Jerusalem, reached Constantinople. Being suspected as a spy, he was arrested, but then set free due to the intervention of the French ambassador. In 1694, he passed through Persia and then sailed towards India, reaching Macau. He remained in China almost a year before sailing to the Philippines. From there he continued his travels, reaching Mexico and Cuba. He finally came back to Naples in 1698.

Only Pietro Della Valle states in his *Viaggi* that the court of Abbas I was his real target upon leaving Rome, as he admitted to one of his closest friends: '*Con questo pensiero mi mossi fin dal mio paese, come può far fede il mio signor Francesco Crescenzio, al quale solo conferii l'animo mio di passare in Persia*' ('With this thought I moved out of my country, as he can give faith Francesco Crescenzio, to which I only conferred my mind to pass in Persia').[13]

Although Persia represented the heart of Della Valle's Oriental experience, his itinerary remained wider: it included Constantinople, Egypt, the Holy Land,

Ottoman Mesopotamia and the western coast of India.[14] Also in the sixteenth century, the majority of the Italian travellers who visited Persia placed much more importance in their writings on other countries. We have only one text dated to the initial years of the sixteenth century that is entirely dedicated to Safavids' domains: *Viaggio d' un mercante che fu nella Persia* (The travels of a trader who was in Persia), included by Giovanni Battista Ramusio in his collection *Delle navigationi et viaggi*.[15] That fact could be partially explained considering that Persia was all but unknown in the sixteenth century. Information and descriptions about the geographic area had been available since the Middle Ages, but it was at the end of the fifteenth century that Italian knowledge of Persia really improved, due to a period of intense diplomatic contacts that involved, in particular, the Republic of Venice.[16] Wider itineraries doubtless assured travellers wider opportunity of showing off their skills in dealing with different cultural backgrounds. Finally, they were influenced by the availability and safety of maritime connections.

Besides this, the analysis of Italian travel writings about Persia shows a common positive attitude towards the country during the whole sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century: in spite of the Islamic religion, Persia is depicted with flattering strokes. A positive myth was gradually being shaped during the early modern age. It is possible to identify two different discourses, even if they are often intertwined in the texts, that contributed to the myth's creation: a discourse of marvel, that can be traced back to the medieval age; and a more realistic and political discourse, whose origins can be traced back to the Venetian ambassador's report. The first discourse is old, connected with the widespread medieval tales about amazing oriental lands.[17] Persia is described as a country of fabulous wealth, sparkling with gold and precious stones, a glittering paradise.

Even if modern-age Persia's fantastical descriptions are gradually replaced by more actual pictures, and monstrous beings disappear from their pages, nevertheless, traces of this marvellous attitude survive in some *Itinerari* and *Viaggi*. The anonymous merchant, author of the aforementioned *Viaggio*, shows this attitude well. Clearly a Venetian, he travelled in Persia for nearly nine years. In his description of Persia, he gives us the image of a country where everything is in a superlative degree. In Urfa, he saw a 'magnificent castle with walls of immense size and thickness', and 'large churches built in marble, more imposing than I can describe in words'. The city, he goes on, 'has as beautiful and pleasant a country about it as one could wish' and 'as great an abundance of provisions as one can desire'. But similar expressions are really common in his account: the 'fine castle named Dedu […] is a very rich place', Jezireh, 'abounding in everything that one can ask'.[18]

In describing palaces and monuments, this superlative world becomes really fabulous: the descriptions of the Royal palaces of Tabriz and of the mosque of

Diyarbakir are exemplary. The former is 'so beautiful that I can hardly say', 'a wonder to see' with its fine marbles, its 'walls all adorned with gold and plaster, looking like emerald', its doors 'superbly decorated with gold and blue, and many signs and letters made of mother of pearl, in beautiful patterns'. The mosque is 'so nobly built that it appears like a paradise, so rich is it in fine and splendid marbles' that are, of course, 'as clear as crystal'.[19] Also, nature shares this wonderful dimension: 'the air here is so fine and salubrious as to induce people to remain willingly and with great enjoyment; nor did I ever see anyone in bad health there'.[20] The accounts of the eastern travels of Aloigi di Giovanni Venetiano, better known as Roncinotto, shows similar traces of this marvellous attitude, even though it is less developed. The long list of cities, all big and beautiful, and the descriptions of fabulous riches that he provides, create an impressive image of the country, which is depicted as an extremely powerful and prosperous kingdom:

> vennero doi Ambasciatori dell'Isola Somatra, detta Taprobana, con presenti di gioie bellissime, et massime una soma de rubini; cosa maravigliosa che valeano un gran thesoro; et perle in grandissima quantità, mandate dal Re di Taprobana al prefato signor Sophi.
>
> (Two Ambassadors from Sumatra's island, said Taprobana, came with presents of beautiful jewels, and above all a burden of rubies, wonderful thing that were worth a great fortune; and pearls in so large quantity, sent from the King of Taprobana to the above-mentioned Sophi.)[21]

Once again we can find marvellous elements also in nature: Persian horses are of such extraordinary dimensions that he cannot reach their rumps at his arm's greatest extension: '*i cavalli […] sono tutti bardati, altissimi, et benissimo in ordine: et gli giuro, haverne visto tale, che alzando quanto piu posso la mano, non gli ho potuto toccar la groppa*'[22] ('The horses […] are all harnessed, very tall and very well groomed/well kept; and I swear to you that I saw one of them so tall that, however much I would raise my hand, I could not touch his back'). However, the discourse of marvel seems to be progressively abandoned as the century advances, and the realistic component of the myth appears to prevail. Its features are already clear in the Venetian Ambassadorial *Relazioni*, at the end of the fifteenth century.

The accounts of Ambrogio Contarini[23] and Josafat Barbaro[24] reveal that they appreciate the country, whose image is not even dimmed by the prevailing Islamic religion. Both the Venetian envoys report this with a neutral tone, and do not comment. On the contrary, they express positive opinions about Persia and the Persians. Contarini is more explicit:

> The Persians are well behaved and of gentle manners, and by their conduct appear to like the Christians. While in Persia we did not suffer a single outrage, nor did we receive injury from any of his followers or from any one else.[25]

Although Persia described by Barbaro is less secure than Contarini's, it is a country where the king's justice is able to repair damages and wrongs suffered:

> He receaved me curteslie, and than badde me welcome, saieng that he han beene well advertised of the death of his ambassador, and of the other twoo, and also of my roberie, promiseng me to see all redressed in such sorte as we shulde susteigne no losse.[26]

Barbaro never says it explicitly, but indicates that Persia is a rich and powerful realm with the long list of jewels that he provides:

> tooke he [the king] out one sable balasse of twoo ounces and an halfe of a goodley facon, bigge as a fynger, w'hout any hole and of excellent color […] I had never seene the lyke, nor I thought never to find any that might be a paragone unto it […] I believe he is not to be valewed with golde, but padventure, some citie might.[27]

The same is true of his description of the court's magnificence: banquets, pavilions, presents.

The topic elements of the Italian sixteenth- and seventeenth-century image of Persia are already clear: a high degree of civilisation, a kind attitude towards Christians, security and justice assured also to foreigners, and richness and power of the highest degree. Later travellers' writings more or less repeat these topics; the anonymous merchant, despite the marvel narrated of in his account, explicitly states that Persia is 'perfectly free from robbers'.[28] Also, adding remarks about Persian freedom, writing: 'each religion has its separate church with its own service, without being molested by the Mahometans'.[29] Ludovico De Varthema proposes a similar positive portrait: 'I likewise will say of them [the Persians], that they are the best companions and the most liberal of any men who inhabit the earth.'[30]

The *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle*, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, represents the apex of the creation process of the myth. With this work, a precise image of Persia is definitively shaped and fixed, reaching its more complex formulation. Moreover, the immediate success of the *Viaggi* assured a wide and rapid spread of this image, at least among Italian readers. Coming from Turkey, Pietro Della Valle reached Persia at the beginning of 1617, following the land route that links Baghdad to Hamadan. Once in the Persian region he expressed all his relief, having escaped safely from the Turks who he compares to the Biblical Pharisee: '*De' Persiani, come amici della mia nazione non aveva che dubitare*' ('I could not be in doubt about the Persians, as [they were] my Nation's

friends');[31] '*alla vista di costoro io mi rallegrai molto, parendomi già d'esser fuori delle man dei Farisei*' ('At their sight I felt a great joy, because I thought I was escaped safe from Farisee's hands').[32]

Della Valle's image of Persia is clear from the very beginning and appears to be very ideological. He already believed and then confirms from experience that the Safavid Empire is incomparably better than Turkey, from every angle, and most importantly not inferior to Christendom:

> cominciai a conoscer il vantaggio grande che tiene il paese della Persia a quello della Turchia, di bontà, di popolazione, di coltura e d'ogni altra circostanza: giudicandolo io insomma, o non inferiore alla cristianità, o solamente nelle fabbriche ed in certa esquisitezza di delizie.
>
> (I started to recognise/understand/realise the great superiority the land of Persia has on Turkey in terms of quality [literally: 'goodness', he wants to say that Persia is just better] population, agriculture, and of every other circumstance: briefly, I judged Persia either not inferior to Christendom or solely [inferior] in buildings and in some refinements.)[33]

We can easily recognise in his *Viaggi* all the topics of the myth, starting with the safeness of Persia:

> la Persia è tutta abitata, e sicura a camminare, ed oggi ancora […] non vi si sentono quelle correrie, né assalti di ladroni, che in Turchia sono molto frequenti.
>
> (Persia is all inhabited, and safe to walk, and nowadays, those incursions and assaults of robbers, so common in Turkey, are unheard of.)[34]

We also see Persia as a land of freedom, especially for Christians:

> i cristiani di diversi riti […] insieme alle case fabbricano anco chiese quante vogliono, e le officiano pubblicamente […] Cosa che in Turchia ed in altre parti di maomettani, non solo non è permessa, ma se qualche chiesa antica rovina non si può rifare, né anco riparare, neppur mettervi una sola pietra, se non s'impetra con grossa somma di denari.
>
> (The Christians of different rites build houses and churches with no limitations and they serve them publicly. This is forbidden in Turkey and in other Muslim countries, where, if an ancient church crumbles down, it is not allowed to be rebuilt, and even to repair it, not a single stone may be put in place without pleading for permission and paying a huge amount of money.)[35]

Della Valle insists particularly on this topic, opposing Turkey's oppression to Persian liberality, especially in religious matters:

> I Persiani, come curiosissimi che sono, e intendenti molti di loro della filosofia e di altre scienze, non solo ricevono e leggono i nostri libri volentieri, ma parlano anche volentieri, e disputano delle cose della loro fede, come io stesso ho veduto più volte, ed in privato, ed in pubblico, non usando essi di stare in quel rigor de' Turchi, di non voler sentire.
>
> (Since the Persians are very curious and many among them are qualified in philosophy and other sciences, they not only accept our books and read them willingly, but they talk and dispute gladly about faith both in private and in public, as I've seen it several times. They are not strict as the Turks, who refuse to listen.)[36]

His personal experience confirms his statement: he himself wrote, while in Persia, a polemical religious pamphlet which was well accepted and opened a debate.[37] Persia is a country of high civilisation, worthy of being imitated.

Lastly, we see Persia as a prosperous and rich country: Della Valle's letters are full of works in progress: new cities, new infrastructures and new palaces. Moreover, he describes Persia as a country that is attractive and rich in opportunities, a good place to find an honourable job and a wife, and to rise in social status.[38]

Later Italian travellers to Persia, such as Angelo Legrenzi, Ambrosio Bembo, Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, and also religious travellers such as the Carmelite Father Vincenzo Maria di Santa Caterina da Siena, all refer to Della Valle's *Viaggi*. They had read the work and explicitly recall it in their writings: Angelo Legrenzi is so deeply influenced by Della Valle that he refers to the Roman noble from the very beginning: the title of his work. *Il Pellegrino nell'Asia*, in fact, represents an explicit reference to *Pietro Della Valle il Pellegrino*, the name by which the Roman traveller was well known.

Besides this, the image of Persia that these later writings convey is completely different. The topics of the myth are still present in their works, but they gain a completely different meaning, being clearly in deep contrast with the majority of the remarks and experiences that the travellers express.

Angelo Legrenzi underlines in his account the safety of travelling in the Persian domain: '*dirò […] essere li Viaggi felicissimi, sbanditi da per tutto li furti, e le scorrerie di vagabondi*' ('I must confess […] the journeys are most felicitous, the thefts, and the raids by vagabonds/wayfarers having been made impossible everywhere').[39] In marked contrast with his statement, the anecdotes that he reports show clearly the exact opposite: guides do not respect arrangements and they try to get money out of foreigners; the route's guards oppress European merchants and travellers:

> Infastidisse solo la pessima natura de condutori delle Caffile per le loro insoportabili malitie, e tiranie alterando il prezzo patuito nelle condotte, e se non se gli adherisse dilungano il viaggio con molte pause ne villaggi.

> (Only the bad nature of the caravan drivers is very annoying. Because of their unbearable tricks and high-handedness they alter the price agreed upon, and if anyone refuses to submit to their abuses, they make the journey longer and longer with a lot of pauses in the villages.)[40]

Furthermore, he talks about freedom, repeating the stereotype set forth previously, but once again the events that he reports make clear the deep change in perspective that has occurred. Freedom that the Europeans enjoy in Persia is no longer due to the kind disposition of the Persians, but is now a right that the Europeans obtain using violence: blackmailed by a guide that wanted more money to continue the trip, Legrenzi and his five European fellows react by taking up weapons.[41] Legrenzi is explicit: the anecdote shows both the malice and the weakness of the Persians, and, on the contrary, it proves the freedom that the Europeans enjoy is self-created.[42]

Also in Bembo's *Giornale*, we find a corresponding turning point in the myth even if it is less developed: the young Venetian noble, walking into the Turkish domain, proclaims his regret at leaving Persia's civilisation, safeness and freedom:

> that entry into Turkey seemed very strange to me after having been in Persia, where I had been courteously welcomed and treated with every civility, where I had found good lodgings and abundant food at very good price everywhere, and where I had been safe from robbers and murderers, as well as exempt from tolls and fees.[43]

Nevertheless, his account does not confirm entirely this image of the country: we know, in fact, that he was asked more than once for duty not due, that he was abandoned by a Persian guide he had paid in advance and that he did not experience the proverbial Persian welcome as he was forced to pay a considerable sum for fruits and straw kindly put at his disposal by villagers.[44] Bembo's opinion about the Persians was not complimentary. He considered Persians generally ill-educated, their cities dirty, and Persian habits, such as at the public baths, unrefined and impolite.[45]

At the end of the seventeenth century, the myth of Persia still survived, but it was, by this time, completely lacking in meaning. Among Italian travellers' writings, the *Giro del Mondo di Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri* represents the highest point of this new perception. Exactly as the other Italian travellers, he repeats in his writing the topics of the myth:

> The manners of the Persians differ much, and are quite opposite to those of the Turks; for they are civiliz'd, meek, peaceble, modest, grateful, generous, enemies to fraud, and lovers of strangers. They bear no hatred, like the Turks, to the christian habit and name, but are courteous and affable to them.[46]

Nevertheless, his estrangement from the Persian world is clear, as well as his sense of superiority. Occasional positive statements are opposed by recurring negative comments:

> The Persians wink at injuries, to wait an opportunity of being reveng'd. They are great flatterers, ambitious of honour, and easy to be persuaded.[47]

He goes so far as to theorise their physical ugliness. If someone appears good-looking, this is due, he writes, to blood blending:

> Gulams […] are well shap'd, brave, and of good countenances, which the Persians are not, for if they have any of these qualifications it comes to them by the mixture of blood with the Georgians, or some other nation.[48]

The term 'barbarous' or equivalent expressions are very common in his account.[49] The real experience being too far from his *a priori* beliefs, he clearly admits being wrong, declaring: 'It is not so safe travelling in Persia, as I had thought'[50] and that 'the Rattars [Persian guards], […] among other insolencies, delight in stripping a Frank'.[51]

In Angelo Legrenzi's writing, it is possible to identify an analogous process. At the end of his report he writes that the Persian domain, even though extended on several provinces and kingdoms, is not as powerful and rich as it was thought to be: '*Dalle quali relationi si può conchiudere apertamente, che il Dominio de Persiani, tutto che vasto in Provincie, e Regni, non è così poderoso, e ricco, come si crede*' ('From these relations, it can be openly concluded that the Persians' domain, although vast in terms of provinces and kingdoms, it is not so powerful and rich as it is believed').[52]

The reversal of the myth appears here explicitly. At the end of the seventeenth century, Persia had definitely ceased to be a country of freedom, safeness and high civilisation in the eyes of the Italians. It increasingly resembles Turkey, slowly evolving into a barbarous, unsafe and inferior country. From the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, the Italian image of Persia seemed to become more and more Orientalistic, according to Said's definition,[53] and a negative myth began to be formed. Persian power is portrayed as despotic and arbitrary: 'so absolute is the power of those monarchs, and so ready the obedience of their subjects'.[54] Persian rulers are depicted as corrupt, depraved and lost in vices: all later Italian travellers insist on their drunkenness, cruelty and lasciviousness:

> Scia-Selemon […] having led his life before he came to the crown, either among women, or black eunuchs, he could learn nothing but cruelty or lasciviousness […] but afterwards addicting himself altogether to drunkness, and the pleasures of the Aram, he so absolutely lost his authority, that he had nothing left but the bare name of a king.[55]

Finally, Persian people are portrayed as immoral, weak and lustful: 'the Persians, […] from the highest to the lowest are great drinkers;[56] they use Opium, and from it borrow that stupidity and drunkenness they cannot have from wine, which is forbid them'.[57] Also in this period, an air of superiority begins to appear. Gemelli Careri, for example, considers the Persian court an indecent place[58] and explicitly admits preferring European company: 'the Polish ambassador honour'd me with his table, which was much better, than the ill-dress'd pilau the others were eating at court, tho' in gold dishes'.[59] Describing the Persian capital, once again, he complains about dirtiness and clearly declares European superiority:

> Did not the wholesomness of the air make amends for the negligence of the people, the dirt of the streets would breed many distempers […] Add to this the filthy custom of casting out dead beast into the publick places, as also the blood of those the butchers kill, and that the Persians ease themselves wheresoever they have occasion. So that I cannot imagine what reason one of our Italian writers had to compare Ispahan to the neat and beautiful city of Palermo, whereas the former is so far from having any street like the Cassaro in the latter, that the meanest house in Palermo far exceeds the best in Ispahan, which, excepting [s]ome few belonging to the king and great lords, are all of mud walls.[60]

The reasons for this radical reversal in the Italian image of Persia can be traced firstly to a change in travel styles. Italian voyagers of the second half of the seventeenth century, in fact, spent only a few months in Persia, while their predecessors used to remain in the country for years: Pietro Della Valle had been in Persia for six years (1617–23) and the anonymous Venetian merchant for nearly nine (1501–10). In contrast, Bembo remained only five months, Legrenzi seven months and Gemelli Careri six months. Furthermore, travelling became more and more standard. Bembo, Legrenzi and Gemelli Careri follow more or less the same itinerary; they report similar travelling times and even stop in the same places.[61]

It is possible to talk of a standard route for visiting Persia starting in the second half of seventeenth century. Mission and missionaries played a central role in this process. Catholic presence in Persia had significantly increased after the establishment of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in Rome in 1622. As the century went on, missions gradually became points of reference for Italian voyagers. They provided hospitality and valuable intermediaries. Friars gave travellers advice, took them to visit the main places and were the chief sources of information about the country for the travellers reports. European commercial companies, active in the country since the beginning of the seventeenth century, also played an important role.

Due to more structured Christian networks and less time at their disposal, later Italian travellers reduced their opportunity for interaction with Persian reality. They did not study Persian language, and remained mainly among other Europeans. Their accounts seem to pay more attention to the 'colonial' reality than to the Persian world. They are definitely voyagers of a different kind: aside from their statements, they do not travel to gain knowledge about a different and unknown reality. In Persian lands, they travel mostly to recognise what they have read of.[62] Looking for the country they had read about in former travellers' accounts, in the end they failed to find it. Persian reality no longer matched with its accepted image. This can be attributed to a change in attitude more than to the actual changes that occurred in the country.

Of course, Persia at the end of the seventeenth century was not exactly the same Persia that travellers had walked through at the beginning of the century. Nevertheless, it is a positive attitude towards the country that later travellers lack.[63] Dealing with a deeply different reality, they were not able to overcome their natural estrangement because they were not motivated enough. Former voyagers succeeded in knowing and in appreciating Persia mostly because of their commercial or political interest.

The experience of Pietro Della Valle is a perfect example of this process. His political beliefs and his hope for a Persian alliance against the Turks allowed him to overcome his aversion towards the Islamic religion. His participation in the life of the Persian court went as far as inclusion: talking about the Persian nobleman, more than once, he uses the term 'we',[64] suggesting that he was perfectly integrated in the Persian reality, even if he always remained conscious of cultural and religious differences.

The positive attitude towards Persia that emerged came from practical interests – earlier voyagers established a more concrete contact with these foreigners and their customs. In this way they overcame religious preclusion and cultural differences, and allowed themselves to know and experience Persian life. In contrast, later voyagers showed a more neutral attitude. They were unconcerned observers, but instead of their status helping them to reach a better knowledge of the country, it made them unable to free themselves from a sense of cultural superiority and estrangement.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the idea of an alliance between Italian powers and Persia against the Ottomans was exhausted due to centuries of failures, the internal discords among Italian and European states, the gradual reduction of autonomous political and commercial spaces for Italian powers, and the gradual waning of the dread of Turks. This all contributed to the creation of the conditions in which the new opposing, but not more objective, Italian image of Persia was developed: an image that soon became an Orientalistic one.

Notes

1. See E. Patlagean, 'L'histoire de l'imaginaire', in J. Le Goff (ed.), *La Nouvelle Histoire* (Paris, 1978), 249–69, and the works of S. Zoli, '*L'immagine dell'Oriente nella cultura italiana da Marco Polo al Settecento*', in *Storia d'Italia, Annali, V* (Milan, 1982), 45–123; D. Norman, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (Oxford, 1997); D. Carnoy, *Représentation de l'Islam dans la France du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1998); F. Tinguely, *L'écriture du Levant à la Renaissance. Enquête sur le Voyageurs Français dans l'Empire de Soliman le Magnifique* (Geneva, 2000); M. M. Benzoni, *La cultura italiana e il Messico: storia di un'immagine da Temistitan all'indipendenza*, 1519–1821 (Milan, 2004). According to Castelnovi's definition, I have considered as travel writings all texts whose main subject is travel, with no consideration for their literary value. See M. Castelnovi, '*Appunti intorno alle tipologie dei viaggiatori e delle relazioni di viaggio*', in *Geotema*, 8 (May–August 1997), 69–77. However, texts connected with travel experiences but written for practical information purposes, such as missionaries' accounts about the state of missions and diplomatic dispatches, are not taken into account. The same goes for second-hand works such as histories and treatises about manners and customs. According to Queller, ambassadorial 'relationi' are also excluded, because a peculiar genre requires a separate analysis. See D. Queller, 'The development of Ambassadorial Relazioni', in J. R. Hale (ed.), *Renaissance Venice* (London, 1973), 174–96, esp. 174. For a definition of 'travel writing' as a literary genre, see also M. E. D'Agostini, *La letteratura di viaggio. Storia e prospettive di un genere letterario* (Milan, 1987); *La letteratura di viaggio dal Medioevo al Rinascimento. Generi e problemi* (Alexandria, 1989); L. Formisano, 'La letteratura di viaggio come "genere" letterario', in A. Chemello (ed.), *Pigafetta e la lettaratura di viaggio nel Cinquecento* (Verona, 1996), 25–45; L. Clerici (ed.), *Scrittori italiani di viaggio* (Milan, 2008), IX–CXLII.
2. *Viaggio d'un mercante che fu nella Persia*, written by an anonymous Venetian merchant, was included by Giovanni Battista Ramusio in the second volume of his *Navigationi et Viaggi* and appeared for the first time in Venice in 1559. It had five further editions until the end of the seventeenth century (1565; 1583; 1606; 1606; 1613). The *Itinerario de Ludovico de Varthema bolognese nello Egypto, nella Surria, nella Arabia deserta and felice, nella Persia, nella India, and nella Ethiopia. La fede, el vivere, and costumi de tutte le prefate provincie con gratia and privilegio infra notato*, which came out in Rome in 1510, had such success that it was included by Ramusio in the first volume of his *Navigationi* and had been reissued 40 times during the sixteenth century. The *Viaggio di Colocut descritto per me Aloigi di messer Giovanni Venetiano, nel quale narra le mirabil forze, provincie, terre, et città del gran Signore Sophi, et come passò infiniti Spagnoli in soccorso di esso Signore contra Turchi: et etiam narra le maravigliose isole che producono Oro et pietre preciose: cosa invero molto curiosa di intendere*, issued in Venice in 1539, was reprinted in 1543 and 1545. The *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle il Pellegrino con minuto ragguaglio di tutte le cose notabili osservate in essi, descritti in 54 Lettere familiari, da diversi luoghi della intrapresa peregrinatione, mandate in Napoli all'erudito, e fra' più cari, di molti anni suo amico Mario Schipano. Divisi in tre*

parti, cioè La Turchia, La Persia e L'India, le quali havran per aggiunta, se Dio gli darà vita, la quarta parte, che conterrà le figure di molte cose memorabili, sparse per tutta l'opera, e la loro esplicatione came out in six distinct Italian editions between 1650 and the end of the seventeenth century (1650–63; 1661; 1667; 1672; 1677; 1681–7). On the contrary, the *Viaggio e giornale per parte dell'Asia di quattro anni incirca fatto da me Ambrosio Bembo nobile veneto* had limited distribution, and was circulated only in manuscript form among Venetian elites and was issued only recently. Finally, *Il Pellegrino nell'Asia, cioè Viaggi del Dottor Angelo Legrenzi, Fisico e Chirurgo, Cittadino Veneto* was printed only once in Venice in 1705, while the *Giro del mondo del dottor d. Gio. Francesco Gemelli Careri* came out in Naples at the end of the seventeenth century, and had five different issues between 1699 and 1728 (1699–1700, 1708, 1719, 1721, 1728). It was printed again in 1791.

3. See K. Parker, *Early Modern Tales of the Orient. A Critical Anthology* (London and New York, 1999). He underlines 'the fact that the account of that journey is unreliable is less important than the possibility that readers at the time would have been likely to have accepted the sentiment'. Although the aim is to reflect on the imagery, those expressions could equally be considered authentic. On plagiarism, see: P. Adam, *Travellers and Travel Liars*, 1660–1800 (Los Angeles, 1962); L. Borsetto, *Il furto di Prometeo: imitazione, scrittura, riscrittura nel Rinascimento* (Alexandria, 1990); M. Gomez-Géraud, *Ecrire le voyage au XVIe siècle en France* (Paris, 2000); and F. Tinguely, *Levant à la Renaissance: enquête sur les voyageurs français dans l'Empire de Soliman le Magnifique* (Genève, 2000).
4. For detailed lists of Italian sixteenth- and seventeenth-century travellers, see the nineteenth-century erudite studies of G. Branca, *Storia dei Viaggiatori italiani* (Rome, Turin, 1873); P. Amat di San Filippo, *Biografia dei Viaggiatori italiani e Bibliografia delle loro opere* (Rome, 1882), 384–8; and A. De Gubernatis, *Storia dei viaggiatori italiani nelle Indie Orientali* (Livorno, 1875). See also the more recent studies of M. Guglielminetti (ed.), *Viaggiatori del Seicento* (Turin, 1967); A. M. Piemontese, *Bibliografia italiana dell'Iran 1462–1982, Bibliografia, geografia, viaggi e viaggiatori, storia, archeologia* (Naples, 1982); U. Tucci, '*Mercanti, viaggiatori, pellegrini nel Quattrocento*', in A. Arnaldi *et al.* (eds), *Storia della cultura veneta* (Vicenza, 1984), 3(2): 317–53; G. Lucchetta, '*Viaggiatori e racconti di viaggi nel Cinquecento*', in A. Arnaldi *et al.* (eds), 3(2): 433–89; G. Lucchetta, '*Viaggiatori, geografi e racconti di viaggio dell'età barocca*', in A. Arnaldi *et al.* (eds), 4(2): 201–50; and I. Luzzana Caraci (ed.), *Scopritori e viaggiatori del Cinquecento e del Seicento* (Milan and Naples, 1991).
5. For European voyagers in the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the seventeenth century and their written works, see E. Borromeo, *Voyageurs occidentaux dans l'Empire Ottoman, 1600–1644* (Paris, 2007). See also G. Lucchetta, '*In Egitto e lungo il Nilo*', in G. Benzoni *et al.* (eds), *Storie di viaggiatori italiani. L'Africa* (Milan, 1985), 106–33.
6. See G. Auletta, *Pellegrini e viaggiatori in Terrasanta* (Rocca San Casciano, 1963); U. Tucci (Vicenza, 1984), 3(2): 317–53; F. Cardini, *Gerusalemme di rame, d'oro, di luce. Pellegrini, crociati, sognatori d'Oriente fra XI e XV secolo* (Milan, 1991); and idem, *In Terrasanta. Pellegrini italiani tra medioevo e prima età moderna* (Bologna,

2002). See also F. Lucchetta, '*Veneziani in Levante, musulmani a Venezia*', in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 15 (1997).

7. The Della Valles' origin harks to the Middle Ages: in 1129 a Rustico was created Cardinal by Pope Honorius II, and in 1334 another Della Valle, Lelio, responding to an appeal from Pope John XXII, fought against the Turks in Propontis. The family substantially increased its power and wealth during the fifteenth century. At the halfway point of the century, Paolo, the real founder of the family, was appointed archiater by Pope Alexander V and then Governor of Rome. He obtained from the Emperor Sigismund V the dignity of Conte dell'Aula Imperiale and the privilege to enrich the family's arms with the imperial eagle. Belonging to the Colonna faction, the Della Valles were prominent figures in the internal struggles under the papacy of Sixtus IV. In 1484 they were banished from Rome because of their participation in the revolt of the Colonna family and their palaces were pulled down. Soon re-admittted in the city, they reached the apex of their family's power and glory in the first half of the sixteenth century, with the most prominent figure of the family being Cardinal Andrea (1463–1543). At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Della Valles entered a period of decay, but were still strictly connected with the papal court and the highest roman nobility. See P. E. Visconti, *Città e famiglie nobili e celebri dello Stato Pontificio. Dizionario storico* (Rome, 1847), 2(9): 846; M. Longhena, 'Della Valle Pietro', in *Enciclopedia italiana* (*EIt*) (Rome, 1935), 12: 559; and the headings related to the Della Valle family in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (*DBI*) (Rome, 1989), 37, esp. 764–71.
8. The Bembos were one of Venice's most ancient and distinguished families. They appear to be among the 24 families that, in AD 697, elected the first Doge, after the reorganisation of the formerly Byzantine province into the new duchy of Venice (dogada), and were traditionally members of the *Maggior Consilio*. The *Serrata* of 1297, with the closure of the ranks of the nobility, definitely confirmed their political prominence in the Republic. Pietro Bembo (1470–1547), cardinal and scholar, was the most famous family member, but other Bembos were also highly placed. The family include, in fact, military commanders, consuls and also Doge Giovanni (1543–1618), elected in 1615. Ambrosio was also connected to the Cornaro family, due to his mother Caterina, another of the leading and more ancient noble families in Venice. See U. Tucci, 'Bembo Ambrosio', in *DBI*, 8: 101–2; A. Welch, 'Safavi Iran as seen through Venetian eyes', in A. Newman (ed.), *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East, Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period* (Leiden, Boston, 2003), 97–121; and idem, *The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2007), 1–16.
9. The Legrenzis were an aristocratic Venetian family, which originally came from the region of Bergamo. Angelo's mother, Orsola Brutta, was a noblewoman from Belluno and she could boast some Knights of Malta among her ancestors, while Angelo's father, Sebastiano Legrenzi, was a lawyer. They had some wealth, as all the three children (Giovan Pietro, Francesco and Angelo) could pursue their studies after their father's death. Both Giovan Pietro and Francesco took up juridical careers, and became, respectively, a member of the Quarantia Criminal

(the highest Venetian penal court) and a notary, while Angelo chose medical studies, obtaining a degree at Padua on 5 April 1664. Nevertheless, at the end of the seventeenth century the family ran into difficulties, due to the death of Giovan Pietro, the unlawful marriage of Francesco and their copious debts. See G. Lucchetta, '*Viaggiatori*', in A. Arnaldi *et al.* (eds), 4(2): 236–40; A. Grossato, *Navigatori e viaggiatori veneti sulla rotta per l'India: da Marco Polo ad Angelo Legrenzi* (Florence, 1994), 103–33; V. Mandelli, 'Legrenzi Angelo', in *DBI*, 64: 308–10; and L. Clerici (Milan, 2008), 1206–7.

10. No detailed information is available on the Gemelli Careri family. We only know that Giovanni Francesco was born in Radicena (today Taurianova, Reggio Calabria) in 1651 and that he obtained a doctorate in *utroque iure* at the College of Jesuits in Naples. He begun to serve in the Spanish administrative system but was not able to progress his career. He was never wealthy enough to travel without economical concern like Della Valle and Bembo, and had to pay for his voyage with commercial activities. See I. Ciampi, *Il Gemelli. Discorso* (Rome, 1859); G. Ghirlanda, *Giovanni Gemelli Careri e il suo viaggio intorno al mondo (1693–1698)* (Verona, 1899); A. Magnaghi, *Il viaggiatore Gemelli Careri (sec. XVII) e il suo 'Giro del mondo'* (Bergamo, 1900); and idem, 'Gemelli Careri Francesco', in *EIt*, 16: 493–4; G. G. Fagioli Vercellone, 'Gemelli Careri Giovanni Francesco', in *DBI*, 53: 42–5; and S. Ballo Alagna, '*Italiani intorno al mondo. Suggestioni, esperienze, immagini dai diari di viaggio di Antonio Pigafetta, Francesco Carletti, Gian Francesco Gemelli Careri*', in *Geotema*, 8 (1997), 107–25, esp. 113–16.
11. For the definition of '*viaggiatori curiosi*', see D. Perocco, '*Fenomenologie dell'esotismo. Viaggiatori italiani in Oriente*', in G. Benzoni *et al.* (eds), *Storie di Viaggiatori italiani. L'Oriente* (Milan, 1985), 144–60, esp. 144.
12. He joined the Venetian navy when very young: in 1669, aged only 17, he took part in the War of Candia, as steersman on a galley, in the service of a squadron commander. Too young to engage in a political career, in 1671 he took up the offer of his uncle Marco, who had just been appointed consul of Syria, and followed him to Aleppo. It is likely that his original intent was to stay in the city; as he got bored soon with its peaceful life, he decided to set out on a eastern trip. On January 1673 he left Aleppo, reaching Diyarbakir and Baghdad. Once he arrived in Basra, he embarked for India. In April 1673 he was on the western coast of India, where he spent more then a year. In February 1674 he sailed back, reaching the Persian coast. He went further overland, visiting Lar, Shiraz, Persepolis and the capital city of Isfahan, where he met Jean Chardin. He finally crossed the Turkish border in October 1674, having spent only five months in Persia, and reached Aleppo, via Baghdad, in November of the same year. He went back to Venice with his uncle Marco on 15 April 1674. See U. Tucci, 'Bembo Ambrogio (Ambrosio, Ambroso)', in *DBI*, 8: 101–2; G. Lucchetta, '*Viaggiatori*', in A. Arnaldi *et al.* (eds), *Storia della cultura veneta* (Vicenza, 1984), 4(2): 235–6; A. Welch, in A. Newman (ed.), *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East, Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period* (Leiden, Boston, 2003), 97–121; A. Invernizzi (ed.), *Viaggio e giornale per parte dell'Asia di quattro anni incirca fatto da me Ambrosio Bembo nobile veneto* (Turin, 2005); A. Welch (ed.)

The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2007), 1–16.

13. P. Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle il pellegrino.* Printed in Italy for G. Gancia, Foreign Bookseller, King's Road, Brighton, 1848, but issued in Turin in 1843, based on the Roman edition of 1662 in two volumes, 1: 512. This is the most recent complete edition of the *Viaggi*; thus in the twentieth century only partial editions were issued: L. Bianconi (ed.), *Viaggio in Levante* (Florence, 1942); F. Gaeta *et al.*, *I viaggi di Pietro Della Valle. Lettere dalla Persia* (Rome, 1972); C. Cardini, *La Porta d'Oriente, Lettere di Pietro della Valle: Istanbul 1614* (Rome, 2001). Unfortunately, no complete English translations are available. Only the letters from India had been translated. They came out in 1664 and were variously reprinted.
14. On Della Valle itinerary and biography, see: I. Ciampi, *Della vita e delle opere di Pietro Della Valle, il Pellegrino. Monografia illustrata con nuovi documenti* (Rome, 1880); R. Almagià, '*Per una conoscenza più completa della figura e dell'opera di Pietro Della Valle*', in *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei classe di scienze morali, storiche e filosofiche*, VIII: 6 (1951), 375–81; G. Pennesi, '*Pietro Della Valle e i suoi viaggi in Turchia, Persia e India*', in *Bollettino della R. Società Geografica Italiana*, III: 3 (11, 13) (nov. dic. 1890), 950–72 and 1063–1101; S. La Via, 'Della Valle Pietro', in *DBI*, 37: 764–71; R. Salvante, *La Turchia di Pietro Della Valle* (Florence, 1997); A. Invernizzi (ed.), *Pietro Della Valle. In viaggio per l'Oriente, Le mummie, Babilonia, Persepoli* (Alexandria, 2001).
15. See M. Milanesi (ed.), *Giovanni Battista Ramusio. Navigazioni e Viaggi* (Turin, 1978–88). See also F. Romanini, *'Se fussero più ordinate, e meglio scritte': Giovanni Battista Ramusio correttore ed editore delle Navigationi et viaggi* (Rome, 2007).
16. See G. Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia* (Turin, 1865); L. Lockhart, 'European contacts with Persia, 1350–1736', in P. Jackson *et al.* (eds), *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, 1986), 6: 373–409; M. F. Tiepolo (ed.), *La Persia e la Repubblica di Venezia, Mostra di documenti dell'Archivio di Stato e della Biblioteca Marciana di Venezia* (Tehran, 1973); G. Benzoni, '*Venezia e la Persia*', in G. Benzoni *et al.* (eds), *L'Oriente* (Milan, 1985), 70–87; F. Cardini, '*Le Ambasciate dell'Asia in Italia*', in G. Benzoni *et al.* (eds), *L'Oriente* (Milan, 1985), 166–81.
17. On the medieval marvellous representation of Orient, see G. Zaganelli, *L'Oriente incognito medievale: enciclopedie, romanzi d'Alessandro, tetralogie* (Catanzaro, 1997); S. Zoli, '*L'immagine dell'Oriente nella cultura italiana*', in C. De Seta (ed.), *Storia d'Italia. Annali. Il Paesaggio* (Turin, 1982), 5: 47–123; J. Le Goff, *Il meraviglioso e il quotidiano nell'Occidente medievale* (Bari, 1983); C. Kappler, *Monstres, demons et merveilles* (Florence, 1983); R. Wittkower, 'Marvels of the East', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1942), 5: 159–97; E. Menestò, '*Relazioni di viaggi e di ambasciatori*', in G. Cavallo *et al.* (eds), *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo. Il Medioevo latino* (Rome, 1993), 1(2): 535–600.
18. Anonymous, 'The travels of a merchant in Persia', in C. Grey (ed.), *A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the Fifteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1873), 143–4, 149–51, 169–71.
19. Ibid., 174–6 and pp. 145–7.

20. Ibid., 170.
21. Aloigi di Giovanni Venetiano, '*Viaggio di Colocut*', in A. Maunzio (ed.), *Viaggi fatti da Vinetia, alla Tana, in Persia, in India, et in Costantinopoli: con la descritione particolare di Città, Luoghi, Siti, Costumi, et della Porta del Gran Turco: et di tutte le intraprese, spese, et modo di governo suo, et della ultima impresa contra Portoghesi* (Venice, 1543), 108r–120v, at 112r–112v. See also 110v–112v and 115r. Neither contemporary editions nor English translations of this '*Viaggio*' are known. On the Roncinotto biography and itinerary, see G. Branca, *Storia dei Viaggiatori italiani* (Rome, Turin, 1873), 240–4; C. Errera, 'Roncinotto Alvise', in *EIt*, 30: 96; and G. Lucchetta, *Viaggiatori e racconti di viaggi nel Cinquecento*, in 444–6.
22. Aloigi di Giovanni Venetiano (Venice, 1543), 112r.
23. On the famous Venetian ambassador, see M. Milanesi, 'Contarini Ambrogio', in *DBI*, 28: 97–100.
24. For biographical details, see F. Gaeta, 'Barbaro Josafat', in *DBI*, 6: 106–12.
25. A. Contarini, 'The Travels of the Magnificent M. Ambrosio Contarini', in Lord Stanley of Alderley (ed.), *Travels to Tana and Persia* (London, 1873), 134.
26. G. Barbaro, 'Travels of Josafa Barbaro', in Lord Stanley of Alderley (ed.) (London, 1873), 52.
27. Ibid., 57–8.
28. Anonymous, 157.
29. Ibid., 147.
30. L. De Varthema, *Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508* (London, 1863), 102. *The Itinerary, Published by the Hakluyt Society,* was reprinted in 2001. It first appeared in English translation in Richard Eden's *History of Travayle* (1576–7). In recent years (1997) it was edited by J. Winter Jones and R. Carnac Temple. For a biography of Ludovico De Varthema, see R. Fantini, *Sulla patria di Lodovico de Varthema* (Rome, 1929); G. Caraci, 'Varthema, Ludovico de', in *EIt*, 34: 1021; P. Barozzi, *Ludovico De Varthema e il suo itinerario* (Rome, 1996). See also the recent Italian editions of his *Itinerario*: E. Musacchio (ed.), *L. De Varthema. Itinerario dallo Egypto alla India* (Bologna, 1991); A. Bacchi della Lega (ed.), *Itinerario di Ludovico De Varthema nuovamente posto in luce* (Bologna, 1969); P. Giudici (ed.), *Itinerario di Ludovico De Varthema* (Milan, 1928).
31. P. Della Valle, 1: 426.
32. Ibid., 1: 431.
33. Ibid., 1: 440.
34. Ibid., 1: 447.
35. Ibid., 1: 600.
36. Ibid., 1: 738.
37. See P. Della Valle, 2: 222–6 and 443–7. Both documents are among the manuscript of the Vatican Library (codice Vat. Pers. 7 and codice Vat. Pers. 11). See also E. Rossi, '*Elenco dei manoscritti persiani della Biblioteca Vaticana*', in *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 'Studi e testi'* (Vatican City, 1948), 136: 259–61.
38. See P. Della Valle, 1: 562.

39. A. Legrenzi, 2: 149.
40. Ibid., 150. See also ibid., 92–3.
41. Ibid., 150–1.
42. On this theme, see also ibid., 182–3.
43. A. Welch (ed.) (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2007), 391. For the Italian text, see A. Invernizzi (ed.) (Turin, 2005).
44. See A. Welch (ed.) (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2007), 317–18.
45. See ibid., 288, 302 and 332.
46. G. F. Gemelli Careri, *A Voyage Round the World* (London, 1732), 2: 18.
47. Ibid., 149.
48. Ibid., 156.
49. See ibid., 115, 132–3, 141.
50. Ibid., 116.
51. Ibid., 112.
52. A. Legrenzi, 2: 131.
53. E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).
54. G. F. Gemelli Careri, 2: 154. Also in Legrenzi and in Bembo we can read equivalent statements.
55. Ibid., 132.
56. Ibid., 152.
57. Ibid., 149.
58. Ibid., 141.
59. Ibid., 142.
60. Ibid., 124.
61. Bembo and Gemelli Careri, while travelling in opposite directions (the former from the coast toward the Persian–Turkish border, and the latter vice versa), follow exactly the same route and stop in almost identical villages and caravanserais. Reconstructing Legrenzi's itinerary is more problematic because he does not provide a detailed list of halting places and distances. He only states the travelling days. Nevertheless, a comparison allows us to suppose that he followed almost the same route of Bembo and Gemelli Careri. So between Isfahan and Shiraz, the three stop in the same village of Maier (Mehiar in Bembo and Mayar in Gemelli Careri), and both Bembo and Legrenzi need 11 days to reach Persepolis. Gemelli Careri takes 13 days, but he goes to Shiraz first and only later reaches the archeological site. A standard route for visiting Persia clearly takes shape in the second half of the seventeenth century. It links Isfahan to Bender Congo, on the Persian Gulf, passing through Persepolis, Shiraz and Lar. It takes 35 travelling days and could be covered in approximately four months. Bembo, for instance, takes exactly four months to complete the whole itinerary (19 May–21 September 1674), Gemelli Careri four and a half months (7 July–21 September 1694), while Legrenzi spends six months in Persia. However, his itinerary is the more complex in the north where he chooses a route typical of the previous century (the itinerary followed by the anonymous Venetian merchant and partially by Pietro Della Valle).
62. On the value of recognition in travel writings, see F. Tinguely (Genève, 2000), especially 71–112, and M. Gomez-Géraud (Paris, 2000).

63. Recent historiography is rethinking the idea of inevitable decline of the Safavid 'state'. In particular, see A. Newman, *Safavid Iran. Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London and New York, 2006), 2–9, esp. 6. As Newman underlines, 'the varied agendas' of Western writers are fundamental and influence heavily their observations.
64. See P. Della Valle, 1: 707–8.

11

History and Iranian drama: The case of Bahram Beyzaie

Saeed Talajooy

Introduction: Literature and history

' "What is truth?" said the jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer.' These are the opening words of Sir Francis Bacon's essay 'Of Truth', in which he problematises the human insistence on relying on 'lies' to create new notions of truth. The controversy over the possibility of reaching truth through philosophy, history or literature goes back to antiquity. Plato (*c.*423–*c.*347 BC) excluded poets from his republic because they told lies about gods and heroes, mimicked the imitations of the universal ideals, and were inspired and thus mad.[1] Aristotle (384–322 BC) reclaimed them by arguing that poets make the general forms of truth tangible through imaginary particulars and that their fabrications reflect on the probable in human nature.[2] Writing in an age in which historical discourse was being reformed for its modern functions and was replacing ancient myths, the annals of kings and versified narratives, Sir Philip Sydney (1554–86) argued that philosophy extracts abstract truth from the events of the past and present, history records actual events and the deeds of people of the past, and literature concretises and heightens human nature and actual events to reflect on human experience and abstract truth. In other words, while philosophy deals with the general in human life and history with the particular, literature communicates the general through imaginary particulars, a contention that remained valid during the following century until contemporary theory undermined the human claim to truth more than ever.[3]

Despite these distinctions, the borderline between history and literature is not as sharp as it is sometimes assumed. They both have perspective, which rearranges events to fulfil a pre-given subjective ideal; heroes and villains, victims and victimisers that are likely to function in typical situations; and happy, sad or

indeterminate endings that trigger further curiosity in the readers' minds or claim to have answered their questions. Since the human mind is shaped by mythical, historical, folk and fictional narratives, our actions and in turn assumptions and understandings of the world and other people's actions are likely to be affected by these narratives. Thus, as individuals may attempt to function like heroes and role models, literature and history may depict actual events as heroic quests and actual characters as heroes and villains, or impose grandiose evolutionary theories on historical narratives.

The borderline between the two, however, is clear in one regard. History claims to be based on facts and promotes or confronts a social, political or historical discourse by means of these presumed facts, and literature uses fiction to demonstrate themes that the author believes to be true of human experience in its individual, social, national or universal levels. When engaged with historical material, however, literature gets disturbingly close to history, enhancing its covert socio-political function to such an extent that it becomes more important than its aesthetic one. It endeavours to mix fact and fiction to project a particular conception of truth that manufactures alternative narratives about individual or national experience. Historical drama, therefore, is an aesthetically complete artwork which constructs its plot on the basis of historical events and people. Unlike history, where the historian is not to meddle with facts, the playwright has the poetic licence to write dialogue, modify existing characters and create new ones to give human presence and life to historical narratives, and rearrange the events to make thematic suggestions about human experience. They may also create fictional events that yoke historically dissociated but epistemologically related events together.

It is in this contested historical function that I intend to review Iranian drama and focus on a sample play to reflect on Bahram Beyzaie's (1938) contribution to rereading Iranian history. I will argue that before Bahram Beyzaie, historically and mythically charged drama in Iran had failed to transcend its nationalist origins or produce aesthetically significant products. Beyzaie brings his mastery of numerous historical and class registers of Persian language and his mastery of theatrical techniques together to project a deconstructive outlook that undermines the authorial voices of Iranian history and myths, and creates alternative accounts that invites the audience to include the voices of the subalterns on contemporary discourses on modernity and justice. As an example of this masterly approach I will analyse the text and the film of his play, *Death of Yazdgerd* (1978), in the last section.

History and Iranian theatre

That in the Shahnameh appear/ Rostam and the invincible Esfandiyar,
Is to let the lords of lands know/ That the world remains from many a man.[4]

Persian literature is rich in exemplary and mirror-for-magistrates narratives. Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (1010), Onsorolm'ali's *Qabousnameh* (1083) and Sa'adi's *Golestan* (1258), for instance, all have engaging narratives on the proper conducts of people and the royalty, and on how excess or pride brought kings or heroes down. In its conception, Iranian historical drama greatly benefited from these narratives of classical Persian literature and their approach to plot construction. The *ta'ziyeh* passion plays, which reached their zenith during the 1800s, were also important in providing dramatic templates for the depiction of history. Yet the structural qualities that made modern historical drama possible came from the modernising vision of the cultural activists who had been educated in Europe and followed the example of European historical plays. Thus Iranian historical drama has its roots in the era of cultural renewal prior to the Constitutional Revolution (1906–9), when the resources of Iranian history and Persian literature were refashioned to create the new narratives of Iranian nationalism. The purpose was to form a modern, 'national' self on the basis of the glories of ancient Persian empires rediscovered in the works of European historians, whose findings resonated with Iranian epics of the eleventh century. The vision was to regrow Iran's imaginary roots from the ruins of ancient empires and reshape Iran as a European-style nation-state.[5]

In the early pre-Pahlavi period, most major playwrights glorified ancient Iran and powerful Iranian kings of earlier periods at the expense of the Qajar kings (1796–1925). The example of such reformists as Seiyed Jamaleddin Asadabadi (1838–96) and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani (1854–96), and such playwrights as Fatali Akhoundzadeh (1811–78) and Mirza Aqa Tabrizi (1835?–1904?), and their continuous attempts to effect some reform in Iran, encouraged some Georgian and Azerbaijani writers, who still had patriotic feelings for Iran, to write historical plays about Iran. Nariman Narimanov's (1870–1925) *Nader Shah* (1899), for instance, reflected on the two extremes of Iranian kings, the Qajar-like ineffectualness of the last Safavid kings and the destructive resoluteness of Nader Shah.[6] In 1909, the young members of the *Sherekat-e Elmiyeh-e Farhang* (The Intellectual Society of Culture) were organised by the scholar Abdolkarim Mohaqeqoddoleh (d. 1915), to establish *Ta'atr-e Meli* (The National Theatre) in a room with 50 seats. They performed plays by European and Iranian playwrights, including Gogol, Moliere, Akhoundzadeh and Mohaqeqoddoleh. It was Mohaqeqoddoleh's *Kourosh-e Kabir* (Cyrus the Great, 1911) and *Jamshid* (ca. 1912) and later Moaiydolmamalek Fekri's *Sirus-e Kabir* (Cyrus the Great, ca. 1912)[7] that paved the way for a great number of historical nationalist plays which were written during the following decades.

In this early stage, glorifying ancient Iran was still a progressive subject, unexploited by the extremes of the Pahlavis' official discourse on nationalism. Achieving its first major literary expression in Mirzadeh Eshqi's operettas,

Rastakhiz-e Salatin-e Iran (The Resurrection of Iranian Kings, 1918) and *Kafan-e Siyah* (The Black Shroud, 1923), the template projected new ideas about the need for political autonomy and freedom, cultural regeneration, women's emancipation, and uprooting poverty and superstition. It tickled the imagination of the intelligentsia and encouraged patriotic commitment to reform among different layers of Iranian society. By reconstructing myth or history, Abolqasem Lahouti (1887–1957), Mirzadeh Eshqi (1893–1924), Saeed Nafisi (1896–1966), Sadeq Hedayat (1903–51) and Abdolhussein Noushin (1906–71) all contributed to this progressive template.

During the last years of the first Pahlavi (1921–41) and the reign of the second Pahlavi (1941–79), however, this officially promoted form became stilted. Since most leading artists avoided it altogether, it fell into the hands of unoriginal theatre practitioners and filmmakers, or their leftist enemies, who rarely managed to tap the creative resources of historical drama. The first group regurgitated the official discourse on the grandeur of ancient kings in Iranian myths and history. The second mimicked the discourse of Russian social realism. Thus, apart from a few plays by Mostafa Rahimi (1926–2002), Arsalan Pourya (1930–94), Bahman Forsi (1933), Kouros Salahshour (1935), Saeed Soltanpour (1940–81) and Yarali Poor Moqaddam (1952), which offer some fresh perspectives on Iranian history and myths, one can hardly mention any great historical or mythical plays written during the second Pahlavi. Yet even in these cases, the stage language remained an issue. Pourya and Salahshour's language, for instance, sacrificed contemporariness and fluency for poetic expressions that are at times stilted, and Soltanpour fails to transcend the discourse of Iranian leftists of the 1970s or create the pretence of ancient dialogue.

With the advent of the Islamic Republic, this official discourse was replaced by one in which the early Islam and Shi'ite religious history and myths were the points of reference so that even contemporary events were mythologised by extending these myths. Whereas Mohammad Reza Shah's theatricality urged him to proclaim 'Cyrus, sleep calm since we are awake' in his inauguration speech for the theatrical festivals of 'Two Thousand and Five Hundred Years of Monarchy', or publish a comic type history book entitled *Beh Sou-ye Tamaddon-e Bozorg* (Towards the Great Civilization, 1975) to project an image of his reign as recreating the ancient glories of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini's theatricality made him explain everything by repeating once and again that '*dar sadr-e eslam*' (in the advent of Islam), things were so and so, launch events that compared the death of government officials in the terrorist attacks against the Office of Islamic Republic Party (June 1981) with the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and his family, and encourage any artistic activity or festivals that glorified the history of Shi'ite saints. In tandem with this theatricality, Iranian official television and theatre produced numerous historical plays, films and television series that filled

the popular imagination with the images of Shi'ite religious figures and their supporters and enemies, and reflected on the contemporary history by insisting on the primacy of the relationship between the clergy and the common people and the dependency of the Pahlavi kings on the West.

Yet the dissenting forms of Iranian nationalism which dissociated themselves from official nationalism continued to flourish throughout these years, both during the Pahlavi and during the post-revolutionary Islamisation periods. In Iranian drama, this dissenting form which played down the role of royal or clerical patriarchs as the fathers of the nation insisted on presenting alternative histories that debunked the reductive narratives of Iranian nationhood. This form of drama had its roots in a socio-political outlook that used Marxist tools to question the validity of the authorial voice of official myth and history and their contemporary interpretations. It also endeavoured to produce histories of people by finding the traces of their lives, sufferings, beliefs, practices and dreams in folk literature, dramatic rituals, and unofficial historical narratives and myths. Though its artistic manifestations and consequences transcended its origins and at times even confronted it, the intellectual background to this project shared roots with Khalil Maleki's (1903–69) *The Third Force*.[8] It also benefited from, but avoided, the extremes of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's (1923–69) nativist vision, which encouraged creative writers to turn to indigenous Iranian and Asian forms.[9]

Beyzaie and Iranian history

Sharing his vision with such playwrights as Bahman Forsi (1933), Bijhan Mofid (1935) and Akbar Radi (1939–2007), Bahram Beyzaie (1938), whose historical knowledge and vision made him unique among his colleagues, became the foremost creative artist of this dissenting approach in its historical vision. Though Beyzaie belongs to a later generation of Iranian creative intellectuals, his works can be classified among the artistic achievements of the dissenting nationalists of the early Pahlavi period, who created some of the most important literary and scholarly masterpieces of twentieth-century Iran. If, for instance, Ali Akbar Dehkhoda's (1879–1959) self-assigned mission was to compile an encyclopaedic dictionary of Persian language, Nima Youshij's (1896–1960) to modernise Persian poetry and Sadeq Hedayat's (1903–51) to produce short stories and novels rooted in Iranian culture, literature and folk narratives, Beyzaie's has been to use Persian language and Iranian visual and dramatic art forms to create distinctly Iranian dramatic and cinematic forms, which, though in touch with global stylistic innovations, are 'archival reservoirs of our visual and performing arts', and thus have unique 'presence and influence' in 'their immediate surroundings'.[10]

Throughout his career, instead of focusing on immediate political conflicts, Beyzaie has attempted to discover why Iranians are where they are and behave the

way they do. He has highlighted the cultural and political failures that prevented Iranians from uniting at critical moments of history, made them apathetic towards their own rights or those of the downtrodden peasants, women, children and minority groups, and demonstrated the impacts of cultural narcissism and tyranny on social relationships. As if responding to Walter Benjamin's pronouncement that the critical historian should 'brush history against the grain' to reveal the past of those who were silenced and lost power in the present,[11] Beyzaie has occupied himself with rereading certain parts of Iranian history and culture in which the process of 'Othering' allows the authorial voice to rationalise the dehumanisation and victimisation of people, and the destruction of creativity and knowledge, under the name of heresy and dissent. As a result, his work stands in opposition to both the Pahlavi official discourse and its Islamic nemesis. He preoccupies himself with history in non-nostalgic ways which emphasise the disjointed nature of Iranian rural communities, ignorance, military coercion and unbridled royal and clerical power as the major roots of Iranian tyranny. By appropriating techniques from *ta'ziyeh* passion plays and *taqlid* comedies, and ideas from folk narratives such as *Touti Nameh* (*c.*1380) and *Samak Ayar* (*c.*1160) in which one finds scenes of common people's life, he has been attempting to write dramatic histories of people.

Aesthetically this is an experimental effort for reconfiguring Iranian drama and cinema on the basis of Iranian indigenous forms, but it is also a quest for constructing an identity for an imaginary ideal Iran through rereading its history and myths and projecting them on the stage in ways that can touch the imagination of average Iranians. Thus, regardless of the truth value of their thematic suggestions, which one may challenge or accept as literary discourses, these innovative forms are most effective when he uses them to address the nation's endemic problems and raise questions about their roots. As he himself asserts in an interview with Hamid Dabashi, his work is an attempt to find answers to his questions 'as an intellectual' and 'a thinking subject', dealing with challenging issues that yoke the individual to the national:

> Who am I? Where do I stand? Or, even more fundamentally, since our characters are […] determined by our culture, who are we? Where do we stand as a nation? Why are we afflicted with our present predicament? What are the solutions to our problem?

Thus, as Dabashi explains, Beyzaie seems 'to have quite serious existential questions of identity, of subjectivity' which make him challenge official reality and cultural norms.[12]

At the heart of this probing project is his deconstruction of certain cultural beliefs and practices by dramatic and situational irony, by juxtaposing what something should be and what it actually is, or by restructuring cultural sayings

and folk tales to reflect new modes of being. The earliest examples of this can be seen in his mythic recitations, *Arash*, *Azhdiahak* and *The Account of Bondar of Bidaksh*. Written between 1958 and 1961, these plays engage with Iranian mythical history and experiment with *naqqali* (indigenous dramatic storytelling) to produce counter-narratives that deconstruct cultural discourses about heroism, power and knowledge, while challenging the glorification of ancient Iranian empires as models for a modern country. They present templates in which sacrificial heroism is victimisation, heroism is desperate confrontation or violent opportunism, and the political system transforms the unifying function of the king into a destructive one by allowing tyranny. For Beyzaie, tyranny has been the major cause of the alienation of Iran's minorities and lower-class people and the disintegration of the country at different historical joints.

The same direct questioning of history can also be seen in his folk plays. In *The Eighth Journey of Sinbad* (1967), for instance, he challenges the whole notion of historical accuracy by showing in simple terms how history is distorted in official narratives. Having returned to his hometown after 1,000 years, Sinbad is frustrated by finding that the accounts of his life have been distorted by official narratives. Yet as he tries to reclaim his past by demonstrating that his voyages have been motivated by a misguided quest for happiness and love rather than money, people take him and his sailors for itinerant comic actors. Using this metatheatrical moment in which Sinbad and his sailors try to perform the actual accounts of their lives for their people, Beyzaie reflects on literature and performance as a means to reclaim the truth of history. While depicting a society beleaguered by poverty, war, deceit, torture and tyranny, he also demonstrates how history is written to satisfy the megalomania of rulers or the interpretive cynicism of the literate elite:

The Scribe:	He escaped when everywhere was on fire.
Sinbad:	No, this is not right.
The Scribe:	Yes, sir, it is. He craved for money. He pursued the wild dream of finding treasures. This is in the book. But I think he was scared.
The Magician:	How? Why?
The Scribe:	He was scared. While everyone was fighting in the wars, seven times he escaped to avoid it pretending that he was looking for treasures.
Sinbad:	This is not right.
The Scribe:	Oh yes, it is. Here, it is in the book.
Sinbad:	I'll tell everyone. This is not fair. Sinbad did not escape.
The Scribe:	No one will believe you, mister. When something is in books, you cannot rub it away.
	[…]
Sinbad:	His first journey was the journey of a hungry man.

The Scribe:	What did you bring?
Sinbad:	Satisfaction for others and thirst for himself.
The Scribe:	Satisfaction for Noufel, the Merchant. The wealth you brought was for him.
Vahab:	Yes, for him.
The Scribe:	And you were his heir.
Sinbad:	Sinbad was no one's heir. Noufel gave his wealth to the poor.
The Scribe:	This book does not say anything about this.
Sinbad:	I myself asked Noufel to give his riches to the poor people of the town.
	[…]
A Street Woman:	Hey sweetheart! You're really good. He is really a good player.
Another:	Yea, he plays the innocent really well![13]

It turns out the governor sequestered the money and claimed in his official reality that Sinbad has given it to him as a gift. These brief pieces have been typical of Beyzaie's idea of history as essentially suspicious, a notion that he has gradually expanded to cover the most important moments of Iranian history and myth in numerous plays and screenplays.

Another revealing instance of this anti-historical vision is in *The Stormy Path of Farman the Son of Farman through the Dark* (1969), where Beyzaie depicts a mad landlord obsessed with the idea of transforming a village girl into an ancient queen. The play shares the idea of the nightmarish reincarnation of ancient queens or kings with Mirzadeh Eshqi's *Resurrection of the Iranian Kings* (1918) and *The Black Shroud* (1923).[14] But whereas Eshqi resurrects these figures to glorify pre-Islamic Iran and promote the discourses of early twentieth-century Iranian nationalism, Beyzaie portrays Farman's attempts for transforming the girl as an obsession, distracting his energy from protecting the land from the colonising forces of the real-estate agents and usurers. Eshqi bewails the conditions of Iran and the people's ignorance and poverty during World War I, and the status of women under the metaphoric and actual veils of patriarchy. He prays along with Zoroaster for cultural renewal or a form of modernity that sets ancient Iran as a model to free Iran from the shackles of tyranny and religious hypocrisy. Beyzaie renders the emptiness of this paradigm by highlighting the extremes of the official nationalism of the Pahlavi period. This, of course, does not suggest Eshqi's lack of insight, but the transformation of intellectual paradigms between Eshqi's and Beyzaie's eras, and the latter's success in translating these paradigms into plays. Beyzaie critiques this nationalistic narrative, not because it was originally corrupt, but because it was abused or corrupted by fascistic or superficial approaches to modernity. The play, in fact, reveals a concern with the metamorphosis of the little man in an alienated, hypocritical world characterised by visionary coercion, opportunism and consumerism.

To go through the details of Beyzaie's systematic confrontation and rereading of Iranian history is indeed beyond the scope of this chapter: the settings of most of his numerous plays, screenplays and films either juxtapose the past with the present, or are recognisable as historic junctures when internal failures left the people at the mercy of external and internal tyranny. Thus, rather than reviewing all that he has done for Iranian drama by his alternative histories, in the following section, I will focus on his masterpiece, *Death of Yazdgerd* (1978). To make my engagement with the play more fruitful, I will first discuss the indigenous forms that have provided the deconstructive background for Beyzaie's approach to history, link them to his vision of experimental theatre and then go through the play. My analysis of the play will demonstrate how he ritually reconstructs a historic instance of confrontation between the downtrodden people and their king to comment on the processes that produce and distort history. I also focus on how the play reveals the cycle of exploitation, which leads to the alienation of people and the ultimate collapse of unbridled power.

Beyzaie and theatrical experimentation with Iranian indigenous forms

Beyzaie is the most important practitioner of indigenous performing traditions in Iranian theatre. If one reads through the pages of his early research book, *Theatre in Iran* (1961–5), and studies his career ever since, one realises that since the early days of his career he has been systematically engaged in picking up and refashioning the forms that he has discovered and dissected in the book. From an aesthetic perspective, this prolific engagement places Beyzaie among those leading theatre practitioners of the twentieth century, whose idea of theatre involved freeing the form from the formalities of proscenium arch and reviving its participatory, ritual and communal functions. His experiments thus offer innovative templates in which the indigenising ritualisation or stylisation processes do not ruin the narrative line, the organic unity or the effective denouement of his plots. Rather than functioning as indigenising attractions or purple patches that work through shock effects, they are properly selected and wrought into the body of his plays to enhance their thematic structures.

Furthermore, Beyzaie usually places these indigenous forms in festival complexes or thematic contexts that undermine their monophonic authoritarian voice and make them serve a polyphonic vision in which, as in his play, *Afra Or the Day Is Passing* (1997), even the author is lost and confused, and the people of different classes appear to reveal their limitations, dreams and purposes. In *Death of Yazdgerd*, he cunningly sets *naqqali*, a form of dramatic narration usually associated with reciting epic or heroic poetry, against the popular purification

rites of *Mir-e Norouzi*, a carnival form that ridicules worldly power. This underlying juxtaposition aesthetically undermines epic grandeur just as the thematic structure rearranges the events and the dialogue to reveal the underbelly of the idea of heroism and empire. It gradually injects the carnivalesque into the sublime to demonstrate the absurdity of glorifying unbridled imperial power and the heroic gestures associated with it.

Mikhail Bakhtin, the first literary theorist who discussed the use of carnival in formal literature, describes carnival as a communal space which joins people into a 'sensual, material bodily unity and community' in which they temporarily suspend their norms and function 'outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization'. Within this space, social taboos are transcended, 'the earthly upper classes', sublime aesthetic categories and 'all that oppresses and restricts' are undermined, and the individual is absorbed into 'being a member of a continually growing' and renewing 'people'.[15] It is this organic quality, this potential for continual growth and ritual reciprocity between the performers and the participating audience, that experimental theatre aspires to capture in theatre. Yet since theatre, as other art forms, has passed through the formalising stages of pre-modern and modern standardisation that has made its mass consumption possible, it is bound by conventions and has to suggest completion. As Bakhtin puts it:

> the basic carnival nucleus […] is by no means a purely artistic form, nor a spectacle and does not, generally speaking, belong to the sphere of art […] Carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people.[16]

Carnival carries no barriers between the performer, the performance and the observer; theatre invests on this barrier as a means for producing the illusion of reality.

Thus any theatrical form which aspires to balance itself between the two has to embed carnival elements in its overall structure:

1. linguistic motifs such as jokes and curses;
2. visual reminders such as grotesque scenes of bodily functions, posters or stage designs associated with carnival performances;
3. stylised movements such as gestures and dancing;
4. characters such as clowns, grotesque individuals or funny stereo-types;
5. or participatory elements such as direct dialogue with the audience, narrators, and live music and songs.

Yet while extracting and including these carnival forms, it needs to avoid losing the sight of itself as a totality of dialogue, action and performance intended to promote or challenge a set of given forms and ideas. The purpose of avant-garde theatre is to trap the audience in a journey of initiation through stylisation and ritualisation. Getting too close to carnival, however, may be as debilitative to the purpose as getting obsessed with the realist formalities of theatre.

Beyzaie's work has often managed to strike this balance. His experiments with indigenous forms turn them into sites of resistance and reform, and create new templates for making theatre and being human. By reconstructing these old forms, he endeavours to touch the subconscious cords of cultural memories, create new spaces of negotiation between the past and present in form and content, and turn the act of watching a play into a rite of passage where the audience is to arise from the pit with a new awareness of their being in the world.

Carnival forms in Iran

The most important component of carnival is laughter and the subversion of all earthly hierarchies. This precludes any possibility of spiritual or religious engagement even if the form includes some religious gestures in the form of prayers or supplications. As a result, *ta'ziyeh* passion plays and the processions associated with the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, despite their cathartic power and other carnival qualities that can be extracted and used in drama, cannot be classified as carnival. Yet there have been other carnival forms in Iran which have continued to be practised until very recently. The most important of these are the ones associated with the cult of temporary king or mocking the lords. Rooted in the spring purification rites, these forms have socio-political functions; they have at times been re-engineered by the state or the religious establishments to function as safety valves to channel and release the dissenting energy of the common people, but they also carry genuine carnival expressions of protest. The first account of such performances has reached us through Herodotus in *The Histories*, where he recounts the story of how Darius came to power. As he is describing the consequences of the rebellion of Darius (550–486 BC) and his confederates against Bardiya, whom the rebels claimed to be a pretender, he writes:

> The other Persians, once they had learnt of the exploits of the seven confederates, and understood the hoax which the two brothers had practiced on them, were soon ready to follow their example: they, too, drew their daggers and killed every Magus they could find […] The anniversary of this day has become a red-letter day in the Persian calendar, marked by an important festival known as the Megaphonia, or Killing of the Magi, during which no magus is allowed to show himself – every member of the tribe stays indoors till the day is over.[17]

In this semi-dramatic ritual, an effigy of the pretender was comically venerated for a day and then beaten and burnt. From the evidence of a later procession recorded by Plutarch's account of the death of Crassus,[18] one can assume that people also made processions in which a person was dressed up as Gaumata and was ridiculed by singing and dancing players.

In *The Golden Bough*, J. G. Frazer refers to a possible relationship between these forms of Elamite and Achamenian rituals and the Jewish Purim, during which Esther and Mordecai were celebrated as saviours and an effigy of Haman was burnt:[19]

> [Boys] make an effigy resembling Haman; this they suspend on their roofs, four or five days before Purim. On Purim day, they erect a bonfire, and cast the effigy into its midst, while the boys stand round about it jesting and singing. And they have a ring suspended in the midst of the fire, which […] they […] wave from one side of the fire to the other […] [as] an emblem of the sun […] [The] kindling of the Purim fires was originally a ceremony of imitative magic to ensure a supply of solar light and heat.[20]

The Persian name of the ceremony is *Haman Suz* (Haman Burning) or *Haman Sur* (Haman Feast),[21] and the significance of fire suggests a Zoroastrian influence.

Another similar festival linking these ancient ceremonies to the one Beyzaie uses is *Kuseh bar Neshin* (The Ride of the Beardless One) which had reportedly survived in limited forms up to the twentieth century. The ritual, as described by Aboureihan Birouni (973–1043),[22] bears some similarity to the procession performed for Crassus, but Frazer justly associates it with the cult of the temporary king and gives a detailed account of the ritual:

> At the beginning of spring […] a beardless and, if possible one-eyed buffoon was set naked on an ass […] and conducted in a sort of mock triumph through the streets of the city. In one hand he held a crow and in the other a fan, with which he fanned himself, complaining of the heat, while the people pelted him with ice and snow and drenched him with cold water. He was supposed to drive away the cold, and to aid him […] he was fed with hot food and hot stuffs were smeared on his body. Riding on his ass […] he paraded the streets [like a king] and extorted contributions. He stopped at the doors of the rich, and if they did not give him what he asked for, he befouled their garments with mud or a mixture of red ochre and water, which he carried in an earthenware pot. If a shopkeeper hesitated a moment to respond to his demands, the importunate beggar had the right to confiscate all the goods in the shop.[23]

Nevertheless, he had to give to the king's men who accompanied him most of the things he received, except the things received between two certain hours. Then,

he was supposed to disappear and 'if the people caught him in the afternoon, they were free to beat him to their heart's content'.[24] Birouni adds that in his time, 'because of its pagan symbolism, the festival was forbidden',[25] but was 'still performed in Shiraz' in a modified form.[26]

In their later forms, these carnival practices transformed to include new characters. It can, for instance, be argued that *Dey be Mehr* (January to October) or *Dib-e Mehr* (Autumn Demon) festival is the origin of *Omar Koshan* (Killing Omar). In the former, which was held on 5 January, people made 'an effigy of dough or clay, put it in the thoroughfare serving it as if it was a king and then […] burnt it in fire'.[27] In the latter form, which is still practised, they celebrated the killing of Omar, the second Muslim caliph, in a similar fashion.

The most important surviving form, however, is *Mir-e Norouzi*. As a comic ritual form held during the New Year festivals between 20 March and 2 April, *Mir-e Norouzi* is the carnival procession that celebrates the coming of the spring. Allameh Ghazvini's article on the form contains a report provided by a physician in Bojnourd:

> I saw a great number of people in a procession on foot and on horseback. One who was in luxurious attire and carried an umbrella rode on a splendid horse. People accompanied him, walking in front or behind, as if they were his entourage […] Some had white sticks in hand with skulls of […] animals on them […] to suggest that the King was returning from a conquest carrying the heads of his enemies. A great number of people, young and old, were following them and making a lot of noise […] People said that during the Norouz festival, one becomes the governor of the town and is obeyed until deposed on the first day of April […] He went around requiring the rich to pay […] which they do. The job was kept in the family.[28]

The report describes the festival as it was held during March 1923, but its dramatic components suggest its link to the more violent ancient rituals.[29] The process of selecting and obeying an ordinary man involved carnival aspects that emphasised the temporary nature of power. Among the entourage of the *Mir-e Norouzi*, there were four clown-like figures in costume who contributed to the merry mood of the festival. These stock characters, *Amu Norouz* (Uncle New Day), *Haji Firuz* (Black-Face Merry Man), *Atash Afrouz* (Fire-Juggler) and *Ghoul Biabani* (Desert Giant), later separated from the procession to perform comic dance-plays, sing songs or tell jokes during the New Year festivals or popular celebrations.[30] Beyzaie, who has conducted extensive research on these forms, has recurrently reconstructed them in his works, as in *Ahou*, *Talhak and Others* (1975), *Death of Yazdgerd* or *The Parchment of Master Sharzin* (1986), to foreground their anti-autocratic content while criticising the readiness of people to punish strangers or those who criticise them.

Death of Yazdgerd

Death of Yazdgerd (1978–9), which carries the subtitle of *Majles-e Shah Koshi* (Gathering for Killing the King or the Scene of Killing the King), is by far the greatest play written in Persian. The play was written during a few exhausted nights as Beyzaie was shooting *The Legend of Tara* (1978) in a village near the Caspian Sea and the Iranian revolution was raging in the major cities. It was later finalised and performed a few weeks after the establishment of the Islamic Republic. Its central themes challenge the possibility of historical accuracy and suggest a parallel between the collapse of the Pahlavi monarchy during the 1978–9 revolution and the collapse of the Sasanid Empire (212–651) during the Arab invasion. It takes a sentence from Iran's history to create a meta-theatrical locus for negotiating the possibility of using theatre to retrieve life from the distorted accounts of history.

The subject of the play is first introduced in a brief one-sentence prologue extracted from history: ' "Yazdgerd fled to Marv and came by a mill. Craving his gold and possessions, the miller killed him." History!'[31] Then Beyzaie embarks on contrasting his own version of the events with that of 'history'. Set in the mill in which Yazdgerd the Third (r. 632–51), the last Sasanian king, was killed, the play begins with the body of the king in the middle of the mill and several characters arguing about the murder. The form, therefore, subverts the whodunit structure of a normal detective play by displaying a process through which the accused gradually exonerate themselves from their ascertained guilt while demonstrating the guilt of the accusers. The mill is the scene of a trial, and the arguments over how and why are gradually engineered to ask who should be the judge and who the accused.

The process is initiated when with the woman's denial of the murder, the plot shifts towards the creation of a series of plays within the play in which the accused – the miller, his wife and his daughter – try to save themselves from hanging. Thus they take roles to narrate and perform the events of their encounter with the king. In her role as a Shahrzad type of woman, who continues revealing, yarning and performing stories to save her family from hanging, the miller's wife functions as a director, checking the reactions of the three judges at every step and shifting or diverting their accounts accordingly. This divides the characters into three defending performers, three intrusively critical spectators/judges, the corpse of a king in the middle of the stage, and a clownish soldier punctuating the plot by his arguments with the miller's wife and his buffoonish comments on how to hang or torture others. The play is thus structured as a series of revelatory performances by the oppressed – a poor miller, a woman and a sickly girl – for the representatives of the three pillars of power in Iran – the aristocracy, the clergy and the military. Thus as the Arab army is closing on the characters, the mighty ones are standing judge against the weak. Beyzaie, as one may expect, refuses to play along the lines

of official history. Instead, the history of Iran is condensed, heightened and reconstructed through the metaphor of the dead king in a context that overturns the tradition of the lower class as silent sinners and the upper class as judges.

The play begins with the judges praising the dead king and the magus droning prayers: 'the people are all body and the king is the head', 'Yazdgerd III, the heroic king' 'was going to gather a mighty army to deliver the land plain by plain from the myriad enemies' (9).[32] The three peasants, however, gradually open their eyes to the truth of life in this holy empire and under such a holy king. Maintaining the overall carnival function of the play despite its tragic force, the woman, in particular, is openly aggressive and ridicules the magus, the commander, the captain and their dead king. She defies the courtiers' praise by insisting that the trial is to stop them from revealing the king's disgraceful flight from himself and his enemies. She bewails their poverty and the death of her teenage son in the royal wars and insists that her son was much dearer to her than any king could be. With the reference to the king's flight, the narratives offered by the members of the family gradually develop to become like a *naqqali* performance. At first, this performance is punctuated by the protagonists' arguments with the judges and their references to the corpse as their witness, but then, as if forcing the corpse to interfere on their behalf, they take turns to use the king's mask to play the king and each other in a fluid circular movement.

The common verbal or visual products of carnival – ritual spectacles, obscene gestures, comic verbal exchanges and compositions, and various forms of vulgar parodies, curses and oaths – are characterised by grotesque realism. This reduces all that pretends to be grand, spiritual or valuable to its bodily functions, and its greed, lust and hypocrisy ingredients to render upper-class pretentions ridiculous.[33] This is exactly the way the three performing characters treat their judges. When the commander, a prince, romantically refers to the sacred blood of the king, the girl suddenly refers to menstrual blood (16); when there is an argument between the woman and the commander over her verbal abuse of the 'honourable' king, the girl suddenly speaks about putting a bag of flour on her head to purify herself (28), a point that is later picked up again to reveal that the king had raped her. The spectacle is also created by the dilapidated millstone as a ritual symbol for time standing still in a dangling moment of history and for the wheel of fortune. It is also seen in the ceremonious crowning of the miller as he is to play the king (29), the role-playing of the protagonists who easily step into and out of the king's role, and the undressing of the king and the lords in fear of the invaders.

It is first the woman who poses as the king: 'Search for the murderer of the king outside, not here! The king had been killed by the king; the one who came here was a feeble helpless man' (12). Then the girl surprises them by stepping in to the role of the king, giving the audience the carnivalesque transformation of a king into a beggar and a poor girl into a king. The king of kings first entered the

mill like a 'beggar' or a fugitive 'bandit' (13), turning the lights off in fear of an unknown enemy and asking for food (Figure 11.1):

The Woman:	He was for sure a bandit.
The Miller:	Or a beggar, how could we know?
The Girl:	*[Moaning]* Give me something to eat!
	[…]
The Miller:	Something to eat? Here is what we have.
The Girl:	Dry bread?
The Miller:	We will make you a quick loaf.
The Girl:	Meat! I am hungry. Give me some meat!
The Woman:	*[Surprised]* Meat! Did you hear that?
The Girl:	You look as if you've never had meat. Have you never seen a partridge or a pheasant? Ah, what am I saying to you? Is there no sheep or goat here to buy for a coin?
The Miller:	We would've been lucky to have a sheep or goat. Our teenage daughter is ill; and goat milk, they say, will cure her.
The Girl:	I am hungry, and you think of curing the girl? Ah, where have I come to? Where is this and who are you? I hadn't heard such creatures live outside Ctesiphon who neither follow the God, nor the Magi.
The Miller:	Ctesiphon – did you hear? All the flour I make goes to Ctesiphon.
The Girl:	I am hungry!
	[…]
	How do you eat this dry oat bread?
Woman:	Soak it in water! For guests we add some curds.

Figure 11.1: The miller and the woman playing along as their daughter plays the king as he first appeared, like a bandit or a beggar.[34]

The Girl: *[Crying]* What he ate was my food for the night. *[Suddenly roars]* Sheath your tongue, you foul brat. Give me some water. (14)

This is a unique scene of conflicting identities when theatrical role-playing allows the king in the peasant to perform the essential equality of human beings and the bare truth of their helpless encounter with the king's exploitative attitudes. Whereas the woman, as the major narrator, later uses the king's golden mask, an openly ritual, carnival device, to impersonate him, the miller's daughter uses facial expressions, gestures and speech tones that effectively break the distance between the characters. In the film version of the scene, in one shot, the girl haughtily says 'How do you eat dry oat bread?' From the corner of the stage, her mother responds: 'Soak it in water! For guests we add some curds.' Then the girl, standing with her right side to the camera, turns in a moment of pain and says: 'What he ate was my food for the night.' Then darting back into the king's role, she roars: 'Sheathe your tongue […].'[35] Shocked by his audacity, they search the sack that contained his royal garb and jewels, but he wakes up, tells them he is the king and threatens them with his sword:

The Woman: Oh king, if you're a hero, go fight with the enemies; why playing hero for us!
[…]
The Miller: […] I said 'Oh, king, oh, commander! May the legs that brought you here break! Who is to answer for my years of suffering? Every day of my life I've paid you tributes and taxes. I've fed your horsemen. Now that the enemy arrives you escape, leaving me with my hands tied, you, who tied my hands all these years! I who know nothing of wars, have no power to fight?' Yea, I told him. I beat him!
The Woman: [Excited] You beat him!
The Miller: Once, twice, thrice…
The Commander: No fouler nonsense has anyone ever heard in the four corners of this tormented land. Didn't your hand break? You beat him, and the heaven and the earth remained unmoved in their place?
The Miller: I…beat…him!
The Woman: You beat him… *[Calming the case]* …playfully, for fun; as people do with the fake king on the New Year's day, setting him up and beating him. We never believed he was the king. He looked like a liar taunting the people. (18–19)

In scenes reminiscent of Japanese Shinto rites or *naqqali* in their use of masks or helmets to switch from character to narrator and back, Beyzaie reveals the emptiness of an empire in which people face daily survival challenges to shoulder the luxurious lives and endless demands of their lords and their pointless wars. Yet

Figure 11.2: The miller's wife trying to transform the meaning of the miller's confession.[36]

the woman's strategy for getting out of their predicament summarises the ritual significance of the play as one associated with *Mir-e Norouzi*, as one in which the lords are stripped of their clothing and their worldly powers, and realise their equality with the common men as they are trying to crawl away from danger.

In pre-Islamic Iran, official dates were determined by a disjointed royal calendar calculated from the advent of each king's reign. Yazdgerd III (r. 632–51), for instance, ascended the throne in year 1 of Yazdgerd III's calendar and was murdered in year 20 of the same calendar. With the death of each king, therefore, came a period of chaos, called *Shamiran* (King-Dying). Beyzaie's play occurs during such a period on day 0 of year 0 when the old lords have consumed themselves into death and new ones have not yet arrived. Beyzaie uses the metaphor of this period of dangling to compare the power of a tyrannical king with the mock lordship of *Mir-e Norouzi*. Striking an analogy between

the beginning of the year and the commencement of a new era, he suggests that any monarch is like *Mir-e Norouzi* grotesquely immersing himself in the fruits of power until his time ends.

The following scene is a perfect example of Beyzaie's sober use of carnivalesque situations. Following the protagonists' first serious encounter with the king, the scene offers a comic relief in which the protagonists respond to the magus' claim about the presence of the king's spirit by beating the air and asking the ghost to testify on their behalf. It is one of the several black comedy scenes in which the priest's gibberish is ridiculed. These carnival scenes punctuate the intense moments of the play by vulgar arguments between the woman and the soldier who is preparing their gallows, the simple-minded or angry responses of the miller to the aristocratic protestations of their judges, and the emotionally or sexually charged banter or free associations of the girl, interrupted by her mother's angry remarks. In general, they contribute to the plot by intensifying the emotions, demonstrating the apathy of people to other people's pain, and highlighting the proximity of mirth and pain in life. Yet they also create the greatest instances of carnivalesque ritualisation in Iranian historical drama.

This scene is lengthened by the news of arresting an Arab, which adds sarcastic motifs to the plot. The rapid exchange between the commander and the soldier parodies the attitudes of military men to captives: the Arab is to be tortured for information though he speaks no Persian (22). The scene also reveals that Beyzaie has no illusions about the invaders, who, by extension, stand for the rising revolutionaries of the Iranian stage in 1979:

> *The Commander:* Ask them why they devastate and burn, why they wear black! And why this God they talk about is so wrathful? (22)

In other words, though the frightening enumeration of tortures demonstrates the cruelty of the Commander and his cohort, Beyzaie suggests that the arriving forces may be worse.

With the case of the Arab soldier temporarily resolved and the commander pressing the defiant woman to continue, there comes a hallucinatory scene in which the three players narrate how the king tried to entice the miller to kill him in revenge for the death of his son, as the family vividly remembered their boy's ghastly wounds and his death (26–7). This is again an emotionally charged scene in which the woman painfully steps into and out of her role as the king to cry for her dead son, as she plays the king in the act of insulting her son to urge the Miller to kill him (Figure 11.3). The scene reflects a major quality of the amateurish performances in Iranian performing traditions: the impingement of the actual identities or life circumstances of amateur players on their performance. Thus once more Beyzaie focuses on how the body on the stage resists the roles imposed

Figure 11.3: The miller's wife bewailing her son as she plays the king.[37]

on it. This incidental quality can be used for its alienation effect as a distancing device or for creating laughter in carnival situations, but Beyzaie turns it into a reminder of the pain the king inflicted on the family by appearing out of nowhere and insulting them in different ways in the hope of being killed.

The scene is interrupted by the commander's angry remarks about the foulness of the lower-class people and the woman's response that this foulness is due to what the aristocrats have done to them. Then, the woman and the miller perform a series of events that suggest the king's paranoia, his fear of being betrayed by his commanders and his desire to be assisted in suicide. Beyzaie weaves the consequences of unbridled power into the body of the play. The more the king has risen in power, the lonelier he has become. He is, in fact, cornered by the system he helped to create, which immersed him in undeserved power while burdening him with arrogance and paranoia. This time with the miller as the king, the woman as the miller and the girl as both herself and the woman, the events unfold themselves in front of the angry judges who keep protesting and denying the king's desire to die:

The Girl: My chest. My belly. I have pain in both.

The Miller: It's hunger, dear. I learned it today. In Ctesiphon I knew nothing about the world. Many a moan that I did not hear. I had turned my back to the world; and now the world has turned its back to me….

[…]

I'll buy the mill with gold coins. You, Miller, tell me, how much?

[…]

The Woman: *[With a sieve on her head]* There're no gains in this trade, man. We are bankrupt, desperate! The millstone is worn out; and we've already eaten the beast of burden.

[…]

The Miller: I'll give you all these coins if you help me.

The Woman: Help, in what?

The Miller: You, strike the dagger!

[…]

The Woman: To tell you the truth, I also want him dead. My days would not be so dreary if he weren't what he is. Yet I'm a man whose hands have never been tainted with any one's blood. My bread was oaten, but never coated with blood. Let me try the good or bad omen on the soil. Say something, woman; is this good, bad? You, daughter, come here; be the miller's wife and say what my response was.

The Girl: *[Laughing]* Me, the miller's wife? Ah, miller, hold me tight for a bit.

The Woman: You, insolent wretch! Be the miller's wife, and listen to what this king is saying.

The Miller: I wish I could get away and be a shepherd. Anyone can flee but the king.

The Girl: Kings always get away and leave us prey to slayers.

The Miller: Not this time. You can invoke their god with its name, hold their horses, open their ways and become one of them. The inferiors become superiors and let you be if you pay tributes. No, no one is to blame. You cannot slaughter a nation, but slaying the king you can. With the king dead, the nation will die! (30–4)

Yet despite their poverty, their daughter's sickness and the fact that they can get away with it if they act fast, they conclude that the king is trying their loyalty and will punish them once they accept his offer. This meticulously orchestrated scene summarises the history of Iran while maintaining the carnival spirit of the performance by the girl's mocking of her mother's sexuality. It also produces a body of metatheatrical referencing by highlighting the king's self-obsessed belief that the nation will die with his death. While commenting on the general nature of such monarchical obsessions, it reminds the audience of a sentence uttered by Mohammad Reza Shah in his summer resort in Noshahr on 18 August 1978: 'If I go, there will be no government for Iran, and Iran will become Iranestan.'

Beyzaie then creates several situations in which the judges are entangled in arguments. The first is through religion. As the magus confirms, the king's order is God's order. Thus the king could claim that if the miller disobeys him, he will be damned:

The Miller: The order of fortune has chosen you, man. Once more, I will command you: Lo Miller, make me a guest of my blood.

The Girl: *[Frightened]* He says disobeying the king is challenging Ahura Mazda.
The Miller: Yes, no one, nowhere in the kingdom of Iran has ever defied the orders of the king of kings.
The Woman: Really? I like that. Well then, please order this Arab army to retreat.
The Miller: You're mocking me?
The Woman: Your orders were orders in Ctesiphon; not here.
The Miller: Did you hear that? I disobeyed him.
The Commander: Is it fair that the servant does not obey the king's order?
The Woman: What? If he had killed him, he would've been a murderer; if he hadn't, he would've disobeyed. Then, what should he have done?
The Miller: Nothing, ay woman, sin has been born with us, and that twin of mine who is closest to my being and whose name is destitution. (39)

The scene is again interrupted by the clownish soldier. But the woman resumes her *naqqali* and plays the king's attempts to infuriate the miller by insulting and beating him, asking him to bark like a dog, boasting about his wealth and mocking his poverty. The detailed inventory of the king's wealth, a point of pride for Iranian official nationalists, demonstrates its obscenity in this scene. Beyzaie's well-researched enumeration of castles, gardens, treasures, carpets, wives, horses, elephants and soldiers shows the underbelly of empire building by juxtaposing it with the absolute poverty of the king's subjects. Then, in two metatheatrical scenes, the mother, as the king, enacts the scene in which the king raped the girl; and the girl, as the king, speaks of her despair when she realised that due to his loyalty to the king, her father would not save her. The scene ends with the miller beating the king to death, but then he says he did not actually beat the king, but finished the story in that way because he did not want them to think he is a dishonourable father.

Thus, once more, they continue the same story with a different ending. Failing to entice the miller to kill him by raping his daughter, the king starts playing with him:

The Woman: *[With two masks]* what a trick! I called myself the king and deceived you. Food, shelter and even a bed mate […] Any vagrant can come to your house, call himself the king and get in bed with your daughter. Ha, it was so easy, so easy!
The Miller: Not so easy – where is my club?…
The Woman: Her body was soft. Nice hospitality!
The Miller: Where is my club?…
The Magus: Do you hear? You all heard in this court that he asked for his club.
The Commander: To kill the king!

The Woman: Who said I am the king? Does my face glow with divine light? Do I have an army, a palace with beautiful concubines? Do I have people around me?
The Girl: *[Crying]* He has a treasure with him!
The Woman: That I've stolen from others.
The Girl: Ask, from whom!
The Woman: From you! Add up the wages of all your days! Wouldn't it be a treasure?
The Miller: *[Desperate]* The days of my life. I've forgotten when it began.
The Woman: I've stolen all your days.
The Miller: Then, you are the king! How can it be otherwise? All the days of my life! I always hoped to plead with the king. Now that he is here; where should I take my grievances against him? Give back what you have taken from me, king; the days of my life, my lost hopes, my son, and my daughter's chastity!
[The generals close their eyes, and he hammers the body]
[…]
The Woman: *[Sits near the corpse]* Tell me, king; how did you find my daughter? Did she give you her reign?
The Girl: *[Crying]* The whole night, it was raining; naked alone she confronted me.
[…]
The Woman: Speak, you mighty king! Was she tame when you were galloping in her?
[…]
The Miller: *[Happy]* I killed him!
The Girl: I pity the dead… Oh, father why did they kill you? (46–7)

The dialogue works at several levels, absorbing the audience in the echoes of mirroring representations. When the woman says, 'Who said I am the king?', she is both herself and the king, responding to the miller in the past and their judges in the present. Her emphasis on the rape scene and the king's sequestration of people's lives also prepare the judges for the miller's rage, as the woman regularly checks to see if their narrative can save them this time. Yet the miller's attitude towards power raises a more fundamental question about citizenship: who can take the days of a person's life without their subjugation? It was not the king, but the fear of the king in the miller's heart, that allowed the king to do whatever he wants with his family. Thus the miller has to kill the king in himself before killing the king. Or as the girl suggests, the king had to kill the king in himself.

With a single sentence from the girl, Beyzaie then turns the whole plot on its head. Realising that even these leaders have not seen the king's face, she reveals the whole history of royal covering by exclaiming: 'I pity the dead… Oh, father why did they kill you?' (47).[38] This commences a new scenario in which the dead man is the miller, killed by the king and the miller's wife. Yet hidden in this

Figure 11.4: The miller's wife dressing and crowning her husband as the king.[39]

simple sentence is a strong egalitarian statement turned into a potent ritual image. Planting a corpse in the middle of the stage, Beyzaie wonders if anyone can tell if this is the king or the miller. Then the miller's wife ceremoniously crowns the miller in response to the request of the judges (Figure 11.4). With the performance that the family puts up, even the viewers hesitate over which is the king and which the miller.

Another carnival scene is then created by the transformation of the attitudes of the aristocrats towards the miller and the corpse and by their failed attempts to recognise a king whose face they have never seen (54–6). Yet this final illusion of truth is again broken when the woman's enumeration of the king's personal belongings proves to the miller that his wife has indeed had sex with the king. Thus once more the identity of a performer conflicts with his performance, initiating a narrative in which the girl, as the king, reveals how the king seduced her mother and conspired with her to kill the miller.

Producing the most powerful scene in Iranian drama, Beyzaie allows a girl to transform into a king to seduce her mother on the stage. The interplay of conflicting identities, the girl's Electra complex, the woman's dead dreams, the king's soft words and insatiable lust, and the voyeuristic eagerness of the magus to see the enactment of the seduction, create moving moments of bitterness and dark comedy. The scene defies summary, but it would suffice to say that trapped in a conflicting net of narratives that reveal the true meaning of their empire, the judges decide to change their verdicts. While the fluidity of human identity and equality of all men are revealed in the characters' role-playing, Beyzaie uses the idea of day 0 to demonstrate that with the king metaphorically or actually dead, there is a slight chance that the monophony of the past be replaced by a polyphony

in which the dehumanised working men, women and children can be reborn as human beings. Thus the miller, his wife and their daughter turn the trial of their family into a trial for the whole notion of monarchy. The leaders hang the corpse as the murderer of the king and the judges express their despair at the arrival of the Arab army by changing their identity to facilitate their escape.

However, despite rendering the cultural mechanisms that perpetuate, aggravate and finally smash a tyrannical system, the play remains cynical about the euphoria of a new beginning that had consumed Iran in 1979. As one of the first instances in which Beyzaie suggests a similarity between the revolutionary ruling elites and the Arabs of the medieval era, the play closes with ominous suggestions:

Commander: I shall discard of this Commanders' uniform. This is a doomed war. The world he made for us cannot be defended. Hah? Why are you staring?

Woman: Lo, man, look! Through the same porch you saw the tattered king coming; now I behold the Arab Army coming for him.

[…]

Captain: *[Sword in hand, running in]* We were all preys of death and did not know. The trial is not over yet. Behold that the actual judges are just coming. A sea of soldiers they are! They neither say greetings, nor farewells; neither enquire, nor lend their ears to answers. Theirs is the language of the sword.

[…]

Woman: Yeah, the actual judges are just arriving. Yours were white banners and this was your ruling, time now to behold the ruling of their black banners. (68)

With the white banners of the king's white revolution gone, Beyzaie was now awaiting the ruling of the black banners of the revolutionaries.

Conclusion

As the best historical play ever written in Persian, *Death of Yazdgerd* reconstructs the history of people under tyranny and places the people at the centre of any authentic idea of nationhood. The play confronts any notion of nationhood that is based on the idea of rallying around the monarch, and sets up a dialogue between the downtrodden and their upper-class lords and commanders. The miller's family, therefore, function as a mirror, revealing the true identity of the ancient regime or any regime that is based on similar premises about the sacredness of power and the individual who represents that power.

Beyzaie's approach to creating historical plays by reconstructing history, myths, folktales, rituals and indigenous performing traditions remained unique until

the mid-1990s. There were numerous attempts to produce plays of equal force, but only Beyzaie himself managed to transcend historical pedantry and confront official propaganda while disclaiming the equally reductive readings of other political denominations. In his path to the 1990s he produced such masterpieces as *The Secret History of the King in Abeskoon* (1985), *The Parchment of Master Sharzin* (1986), *The New Preface to the Shahnameh* (1986) and *The Reed Panel* (1992), which turn historical drama into truthful images of human engagement with life. Since the late 1990s, however, Mohammad Rahmanian (1962), Hamid Amjad (1968) and a few other playwrights have produced plays that approach Beyzaie's vision by picking up narratives from Iranian or Islamic history and myths to deconstruct retrogressive cultural beliefs by exposing the fallacies of the historical discourses used to support them.

Notes

1. Plato, *The Republic*, tr. Benjamin Jowett (Project Gutenberg, 1998). Available at www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1497. See books II, III, VII and X in particular.
2. Aristotle, *The Poetics*, tr. S. H. Butcher (Project Gutenberg, 1999). Available at www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1974. See parts VIII, IX, X and XV.
3. Phillip Sydney, 'The Defence of Poesy', in M. H. Abrams and Stephan Greenblatt, *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 2006), 959–62.
4. Sa'di, '*Qasideh dar Madh-e Inankou*' (Ode on Inankou) in *Kolliyat-e Sa'di* (Complete Works of Sa'di) (Tehran: Mousa Elmi, 1975), 667–70.
5. For more, see Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
6. Jamshid Malekpur, *Adabiyat Namayeshi dar Iran* (Dramatic Literature in Iran) (Tehran: Tus, 1983), Vol. II, 125–6.
7. Abolqasem Janati-Ataei, *Bonyad-e Namayesh dar Iran* (The Foundation of Drama in Iran) (Tehran: Nobahar, 1954), 61–3 and 127.
8. For Maleki, see Homa Katouzian and Amir Pishdad (eds), *Yadnameh Khalil Maleki* (In Memory of Khalil Maleki) (Tehran: Enteshar, 1991).
9. For more, see Mehrzad Broujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse: SUP, 1996).
10. Hamid Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema: Past, Present and Future* (London and New York: Verso, 2001): 83.
11. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the philosophy of history', in *Walter Benjamin Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zone (New York: Schocken Press, 1969), 261.
12. Dabashi, 2001: 83–4.
13. Bahram Beyzaie, '*Safar Hashtom-e Sandbad*' (The Eighth Journey of Sinbad) in *Divan-e Namayesh/1* (Collected Plays 1), 13–14 and 24.
14. See Mirzadeh Eshqi, *Kolliyat-e Mosavvar-e Eshqi* (The Illustrated Collection of Eshqi's Works) (Tehran, 1963), Book 4, 25–39 and 48–57.
15. Michael Bakhtin, *Rabelias and His World*, tr. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA, 1968), 92 and 255.

16. Bakhtin, 1968: 7.
17. Herodotus, *The Histories*, tr. Aubrey de Selicourt (London: Penguin, 1972), 238 (Book Three, part 79).
18. The account as Plutarch puts it is as follows:

> Surena took the head and hand of Crassus and sent them to [the Parthian King] Hyrodes in Armenia, but he himself sent words […] to Seleucia that he was bringing Crassus there alive, and prepared a laughable sort of procession which he insultingly called a triumph. That one of his captives who bore the greatest likeness to Crassus, Caius Paccianus, put on a woman's royal robe, and under instructions to answer to the name of Crassus and the title of Imperator when so addressed, was conducted along on horseback. Before him rode trumpeters and a few lectors borne on camels; from the faces of the lectors purses were suspended […] behind these followed courtesans of Seleucia, musicians, who sang many scurrilous and ridiculous songs about the effeminacy and cowardice of Crassus; and these things were for all to see. Plutarch, *Lives*, tr. Bernadotte Perrin (London: William Heinemann, 1915), Vol. III: 417–19.

19. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, V. VI, *The Scapegoat* (London: Macmillan, 1919), 364–70 and 390–4.
20. Israel Abraham, *The Book of Delight and Other Papers* (Philadelphia, 1912), 266–7, in Frazer, 1919: 393.
21. Either Frazer or Edward Sachau, whose translation of Biruni's *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* is Frazer's source, makes the mistake of translating *Haman Sur* as 'Burning of Haman'.
22. Birouni, *At-tafhim Le Avaael-e Sanaat At-tanjim*, ed. Jalal Homaei (Tehran: Majles, 1937), 256–7.
23. Frazer, 1919: 402–3.
24. Ibid., 403.
25. Aboureihan Birouni, *Ajayeb Al-Makhlouqaat* (Tehran, 1283 L.H. [1867]), 49, in Bahram Beyzaie, *Namayesh dar Iran* (Theatre in Iran) (Tehran: Roshangaran, 2001), 41.
26. Birouni, 1937: 257.
27. Abureihan Birouni, *Al-Athaar Al-Baqiyah En Al-Qorun Al-Khaaliyah*, ed. Edward Sachau (Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenl, Gesellschaft, 1923), 226; also in Beyzaie, 2001: 42.
28. Allameh Ghazvini, 'Mir-e Noroozi' (New Year Ruler), *Yadegar* (Tehran, 1944), 1:3, 13–16.
29. Mohammad Jafar Yahaqqi states that a festival called *Mir-e Mirin*, which is very similar to Mir-e Norouzi, is still practised during the New Year festivals in Iranian Kurdistan, particularly in Mahabad. See M. J. Yahaqqi, *Farhang-e Asatir va Esharat-e Dastani dar Adabiyat-e Farsi* (The Dictionary of Myths and Narrative Allusions in Persian Literature) (Terhan: Soroush, 1996), 356.
30. Beyzaie, 2001: 53–4.
31. *Marg-e Yazdgerd: Majles-e Shahkoshi* (Death of Yadgerd: Gathering for Regicide) (Tehran, 2002), 1.
32. Bahram Beyzaie, *Marg-e Yzadgerd* (Death of Yazdgerd) (Tehran: Roshangaran, 1380/2001). All translations are mine. The page numbers of the quotations from the text of the play are from here mentioned in the text.

33. See Bakhtin, 1968: 13 and 287.
34. The photo registers Mehdi hashemi as the miller, Soosan Taslimi as the woman, and in the back Mahmoud Behrouziyan as the magus (right) and Karim Akbari as the captain. The photo is from Bahram Beyzaie's collection.
35. Bahram Beyzaie, *Marg-e Yazdgerd* (Death of Yazdgerd), CD (Tehran: Lissar Film, 1978), 14:05 to 15:00.
36. Screenshots from Beyzaie, *Marg-e Yazdgerd*, CD, 22:23.
37. Mehdi Hashemi as the miller, Soosan Taslimi as the miller's wife and Yasaman Arami as the miller's daughter. In the background, from right: Mahmoud Behrouziyan as the magus, Amin Tarokh as the prince/commander and Karim Akbari as the captain. The photo is from Bahram Beyzaie's collection.
38. Whereas ancient Greece seems to have been a culture of revelation and nudity, Iran, especially in its city life, had a proclivity towards complication and veiling. As Beyzaie explains:

    > members of the aristocracy […] always covered their faces. By such kinds of concealment, certain unfathomable dimensions were added to their character. They became mythologized in a way. Nobody dared to talk about them anymore […] the ancient Iranian kings covered their faces with a mask. The function of this mask was not just to give certain lustre to their presence, something which must have been related to Mithraism because they were thought of as the representatives of Mithra on earth, but the more important point is that their human frailty was invisible. You could not penetrate their character, because nobody could actually see their facial features and expressions (Dabashi, 2001: 67).

39. Beyzaie, *Marg-e Yazdgerd*, CD, 1:25:50.

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10. Safavid Persia through Italian eyes: From reign of freedom to land of oppression

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Abbreviations:
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